



DULCIE CARLYON

By the Author of

"The Romance of War"





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DULCIE CARLYON.



DULCIE CARLYON.

A Novel.

BY

JAMES GRANT,

AUTHOR OF 'THE ROMANCE OF WAR,' ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON :

WARD AND DOWNEY,

12, YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN.

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DULCIE CARLYON.



CHAPTER I.

THE PURSUIT.

A NEW emotion—a hot thirst for blood—was in the heart of Florian now; his whole nature seemed to have undergone a sudden and temporary change; and to those who could have seen him his face would have been found deadly pale, and his dark eyes full of sombre fury.

The longing for retribution and destruction was keen in his mind at that time. Often he reined up the horse he rode to take a steady shot between the animal's quivering ears at one or other of the two desperadoes; but always missed them, and found that time was thus lost and the distance increased.

His present charger was not so steady as the old Cape nag, Tattoo, and Florian's hands, in the intensity of his excitement, trembled too much for his aim to be true ; so the fugitives rode on and on, without firing a shot in return, thus showing that their ammunition had been expended, and they had nothing to hope for or trust to but a successful escape.

A cry left Florian's lips as the fugitives disappeared into a donga, and he thought he had lost them ; but anon he saw them ascending the opposite slope at a rasping pace.

He could only think of the generous and chivalrous Vivian Hammersley, that good officer and noble Englishman, shot down thus in the pride of his manhood by the felon hand of an assassin, whose bullet was meant for himself—Hammersley, whose form stood with a kind of luminous atmosphere amid the dark surroundings that beset them both since he (Florian) had come as a soldier to Zululand ; and then he thought of Dulcie's friend Finella, whom he only knew by name.

Poor girl ! the next mail for Britain might

bring sorrowful tidings to her, with the very letter his hand had so recently indited, full of hope and expressions of happiness.

Crossing by flying leaps the Umvutshini stream, a tributary of the greater Umvolosi, the pursuers and pursued traversed an undulating tract of country, scaring a great troop of the brindled gnu, which were grazing quietly there; anon a terrified herd of the koodoo—graceful antelopes, with magnificent spiral horns—swept past them, where the karoo shrubs and the silvery hair-grass and wild oats grew; elsewhere their horses' hoofs, as they crushed or bruised the creeping fibrous roots of the *Akerrania*, shed a fragrance in the air.

The Umvolosi had now to be waded through near a rocky kop which towered on the right hand, and the opposite bank had to be scrambled up at a place where the tree-fern flourished thickly, and drooping date-palms overhung the water.

Next they had to cross a nameless tributary of the Upoko River, and then to skirt the base of the Mabenge Mountains (within

two miles of Fort Newdigate), where, in some places, an odour, sickly and awful, loaded the evening air; and by experience they knew it came from the bodies of slain Zulus lying unburied, or covered only by their shields and a few loose stones.

In some places—one particularly—Florian and his companions found their progress almost arrested by spiky plants of giant size—the Doornboom, with its ox-horn-like prickles; for there are thickets of those through which even horses cannot pass—odious and terrible plants which tear the clothes to rags, and pierce the flesh to the bone; but they discovered two breaches through which the fugitives had passed, and, forcing a passage, they rode onward again, and, in the fierce ardour of pursuit, Florian was all unconscious, till afterwards, how he and his horse too were lacerated, scratched, and torn by the sharp spines as he rushed through them at full speed.

One of the fugitives had evidently found a cartridge, in a pocket perhaps, for he fired one shot rearward, in Parthian fashion, but

fruitlessly, as it hit no one, and then he rode wildly but steadily on.

Believing that if ever he returned to camp it would only be to find his friend dying or dead, Florian, plunged in grief, maddened by rage and a thirst for dire vengeance, rode furiously yet silently on, closely followed by his four infantry men.

His horse—Hammersley's—was a fine English charger, and soon outstripped those of his comrades, who ere long began to drop rearward one after another, though Tom Tyrrell continued to head the rest ; but after a time Florian found himself almost alone ; thus it was fortunate for him that those he pursued were without ammunition.

Once or twice he lost sight of them, as dongas or eminences intervened, and then a low cry would escape him ; but by the aid of his field-glass he 'spotted' them again, and gored his horse with the spurs anew.

Now broad before them lay the foaming Nondweni River, with the lion-shaped hill of Isandhlwana about seven miles distant, its rocky crest then reddened by the western sun,

and Florian knew that now the pursuit had lasted for more than twenty miles from the Euzangonyan Hill.

Here the assassins reined up, and seemed to confer for a moment or two, as if in evident confusion and dismay. To remain was to die, and to attempt to cross the river would end in death by drowning, it was so deep and swift, red and swollen by recent storms of such rain as falls in the tropics only.

Florian dismounted now, dropped a fresh cartridge into the breech-block of the rifle he still carried, and just as he threw the bridle over his arm, Tóim Tyrrell came tearing up and also leaped from his saddle, prepared to fire at four hundred yards range.

The two fugitives plunged into the water, where trees, branches, cartloads of enormous leaves and yellow pumpkins were being swept past, and strove to make their horses breast the stream by turning them partly at an angle to the current. More than once the animals snorted with fear, throwing up

their heads wildly as their haunches went down under the weight of their riders.

Tyrrell fired and shot one in mid-stream ; he threw up his hands in agony or despair, and fell on the mane of his horse, which, with himself, was swept round a rocky angle and disappeared.

The other had gained footing on the opposite bank, but at that moment Florian planted a rifle bullet between his shoulders.

Sharply rang the report of the rifle, and a shriek mingled with the rush of the world of waters as the deserter and assassin fell backward over the crupper of his struggling horse, which gained the land, while his rider sank to rise no more just as the last red rays of the sun died out on the stern hill-tops, and in its rush the river seemed to sweep past with a mightier sound than ever.

Which of the two he had shot in the twilight Florian knew not, nor did he care ; suffice it that he and Tom Tyrrell 'had polished them off,' as the latter said, and thereupon proceeded to light his pipe with an air of profound contentment.

Hammersley was avenged, certainly.

Before setting out on his return, Florian paused to draw breath, to wipe the cold perspiration from his forehead, and nerve himself anew for aught that might befall him on his homeward way, for with tropical speed darkness had fallen now, and he was glad when he and Tyrrell overtook the three mounted men, as they had a most lonely district to traverse back to camp, and one in which they were not likely to meet friends ; so they now rode somewhat slowly on, breathing and enjoying what some one calls the cool and mysterious wind of night.

Zulus might be about in any number, with rifle, assegai, and knobkerie ; but though Florian and his companions rode with arms loaded as a precaution, they scarcely thought of them, and were intent on comparing notes and studying the features of the country as a guide on their lonely way.

At last, with supreme satisfaction, after many detours and mistakes, they saw the red glowworm-like lights of the camp appearing

in the streets of tents, and knew thereby that the last bugle had not sounded.

Ere long they heard the challenge of the advanced sentinel of an outlying piquet, and responding thereto, passed within the lines, when Florian went at once to the head-quarter tents to report himself to the Adjutant-General, together with the events that had so recently transpired by the Nondweni River.

‘ You have done precisely what the General commanding would have ordered you to do,’ said the Adjutant-General, ‘ and I am sure he will thank you for punishing the rascals as they deserved. There are too many of “ Cardwell’s recruits ” afloat in Cape Colony !’

‘ Is Captain Hammersley still alive ?’

‘ Yes—but little more, I fear.’

He repaired straight to the sufferer’s tent, but was not permitted by the hospital orderly, acting under the surgeon’s strict orders, to see him—or at least to speak with him.

The ball had broken some of the short ribs

on the left side, nearly driving them into the lung; thus he was in a dangerous state. Florian peeped into the bell-tent, and, by a dim lantern hung on the pole thereof, could see Hammersley lying on his camp-bed asleep, apparently, and pale as marble; and he thought it a sorrowful sight to see one whose splendid physique seemed of that kind which no abstract pain or trouble could crush—who could ever bear himself like a man—weak now as a little child—levelled by the bullet of a cowardly assassin.

Florian, though worn, weary, and sorely athirst after the skirmish by the Euzangonyan Hill, the subsequent pursuit, and all connected therewith, before betaking him to his tent, paid his next visit to Tattoo, for, after his friend, he loved his horse.

A little way apart from where the store-waggons were parked and the artillery and other horses knee-haltered, Tattoo was lying on a heap of dry brown mealie-stalks in a pool of his own blood, notwithstanding that, awaiting Florian's return and orders, a kindly

trooper of the Mounted Infantry had bound an old scarlet tunic about the poor animal's off thigh, where the bullet, meant for his rider, had made a ghastly score-like wound, in one part penetrating at least seven inches deep; and where Tattoo had remained standing for some time in one spot, the blood had dripped into a great dark crimson pool.

‘Can nothing be done to stop it?’ asked Florian.

‘Nothing, sir,’ replied a Farrier-Sergeant of the Royal Artillery.

‘But the horse will die if this kind of thing goes on.’

The sergeant shrugged his shoulders, saluted, and turned away, while Florian put an arm round the drooping head of the horse caressingly; and, as if sensible of his sympathy, the animal gazed at him with his large, soft brown eyes, that were streaked with blood-shot veins now.

‘His vitals is safe, sir, anyhow,’ said Tom Tyrrell.

‘I can't leave him thus in the cold—for

cold it is here, by Jove, at night ; bring a blanket from my tent, Tom, and put it over him.'

After belting the blanket about Tattoo, by the light of a stable-lantern, Florian lingered for a time beside the poor nag, who hung his head with unmistakable symptoms of intense pain, while his drooping eyes grew dull and heavy.

Without undressing, Florian threw himself on his humble camp-bed, which consisted of little else than a blanket and ground sheet, but was unable to sleep more than ten minutes or so at a stretch. The fighting, the hot pursuit by hill and stream and karoo—the excitement of every kind, and the whole work he had been doing—had fevered his brain, and ever and anon he started from his pillow as if a snake had been under it ; and so passed the few short hours till drum and bugle announced the *reveille*, and that the day-work of the camp had begun.

To those who saw him, he looked haggard in the cold, grey, early light, as he quitted his camp-bed, unrested and unrefreshed,

though mere repose of the body is supposed to be a relief, and, as it was too early to disturb Hammersley, he went straight to visit Tattoo.

He was standing up now among the mealies of his litter, with his head drooping lower and his bright eyes more dim than ever ; but they actually seemed to dilate and brighten at the sound of his master's voice. The latter had brought him the half of his ration-biscuit, soaked in water ; and Tattoo looked at it with dumb longing, and turned it over in Florian's palm with his hot, soft, velvet nose ; but after trying to champ it once or twice he let it fall to the ground. Tattoo was incapable of swallowing now.

There was little time to do much, as the troops were soon to march ; but Tom Tyrrell brought some hot water in a bucket, and sluiced the wound with a sponge, and redressed it with such rough bandages as could be procured, and Florian got from Doctor Gallipot some laudanum to mix with the horse's drink to deaden the acuteness of the pain he suffered ; but it was all in vain ;

Tattoo sank grovelling down upon his fore-knees and rolled heavily over on his side, and, as the wound welled forth again, he turned his head and looked at his master, and if ever eyes expressed a sense of gratitude, those of the old troop-horse did so then.

‘We march in a very short time, sir,’ said the senior officer commanding the Mounted Infantry, as he reined in his charger for a minute *en passant*; ‘and in the cause of humanity, as your horse cannot recover, it had better be put out of pain.’

‘Shot?’

‘Yes.’

‘Poor Tattoo!’

Florian turned away, sick at heart, as he saw a soldier quietly dropping a cartridge into the breech-block of his rifle in obedience to the stern but necessary order, for if left thus, the horse would be devoured while living by the monstrous Kaffir vultures.

With carefully sighted rifle, and distance as carefully judged, Florian had ‘potted’ many a Zulu at various hundreds of yards, in

common with his comrades ; he had shot, as he supposed, Josh Jarrett without an atom of compunction ; but now, as he hurried away, he put his fingers in his ears to shut out the report of the rifle that announced the death of Tattoo.

As a souvenir of the latter—for Dulcie, perhaps—he desired Tom Tyrrell to cut off one of the hoofs, and Tom polished the hoof and burnished the iron shoe till the latter shone like silver—the hoof that never again would carry Florian across the wild karoo, or to the front in the face of the enemy.

The Second Division now began its march to encamp on the fatal hill of Isandhlwana—that place of ill omen.

Hammersley was conveyed with other wounded in an ambulance waggon, and it was decided that if he recovered sufficiently he should be sent home on sick leave to Britain. Florian occasionally rode by the side of the waggon, the motion of which was anything but easy or pleasant to those who were in pain.

How pale, he thought, Hammersley looked,

with his delicate nostrils, clearly cut mouth, and dark moustache ; and his mind went from thence to Finella Melfort, the girl he loved, who was so far away, and whom he might not be spared to see again.

‘ Write gently about all this affair to Miss Carlyon,’ said Hammersley feebly. ‘ But the infernal telegrams will make poor little Finella *au fait* of my danger before details can reach her.’ Then he muttered to himself, ‘ How truly it has been said that the indifferent are often tied to each other irrevocably, while those who love truly are parted far as east from west.’

‘ So you have fully avenged me, I hear ?’ he said, after a pause, while his features were contracted by pain.

‘ Of that there is no doubt,’ replied Florian.

‘ For that I thank you, old fellow, though I am low enough—in that state, in fact, in which, we are told, we should forgive our enemies, and pray for those who spitefully use us.’

‘ These two rascals are past being forgiven now. I dare say long ere this their bodies

have been swept into the White Umvoloski,' said Florian, who still felt somewhat savage about the whole episode.

'Well, I am going to the rear at last, but I hope we shall meet again. If not,' he added, with a palpable break in his voice, 'my ring—take and keep it in remembrance of me.' And as he spoke Hammersley drew from his finger a magnificent gipsy ring, in which there was a large and valuable opal, and forced it upon the acceptance of Florian.

'The opal is said to be a stone of ill-omen,' said Hammersley with a faint smile, 'but it never brought ill-fortune to me.'

Florian knew nothing of that, and, if he had, would probably not have cared about it, though reared in Devonshire, the land of the pixies and underground dwarfs and fairies.

'The only reason for the stone being thought unlucky,' said Hammersley, smiling, 'is that Mark Antony, Nadir Shah, and Potemkin, wearers of great opals, all came to grief.'

'Going home, I hear, Hammersley,' lisped a smart young *aide-de-camp*, cantering up to the

ambulance waggon. 'Egad, I envy you—you'll see something better than Kaffir damsels there!'

Hammersley, in the midst of his acute pain, somewhat resented the other's jollity, and said :

'The poor Kaffir damsels are content with the handiwork of God, and don't paint their faces red and white, as our English women do in the Row and Regent Street, Villiers.'

'You'll soon be home—there is no such thing as distance now,' rejoined the young staff officer.

'Yes, Villiers, I am sorry to leave you all ; but I am going back to England—dear old England—the land of fog, as Voltaire says, with its one sauce and its three hundred and sixty-five religions,' he added, with a feeble smile, thinking he was perhaps rather sharp in his tone to Villiers.

'And you have lost your favourite horse, I hear?' said Hammersley to Florian.

'Yes, poor animal.'

'Then take mine. I need not ask you to be kind to him. Who can say but you may

lend him to me one day for a run at Melton again? Now, good-bye, old fellow, God bless you!

They wrung each other's hands and parted, Florian to ride on to the new camp at the Isandhlwana Hill, prior to the march for Ulundi, and Vivian Hammersley to go with the rest of the wounded and sick to the coast for conveyance to Plymouth.

CHAPTER II.

WHICH TREATS OF LOVE-LETTERS.

THE middle of July had come, and matters remained almost unchanged in the family circle at Craigengowan. Lady Fettercairn had not yet carried out her threat of getting rid of Dulcie Carlyon, though a vague sense of dislike of the latter was fast growing in her mind.

Hammersley seemed to be effectually removed from Finella's sphere, though by what means Lady Fettercairn knew not ; but still Shafto made no progress with the heiress ; thus she feared some secret influence was exerted over him by ' this Miss Carlyon,' and would gladly have had old Mrs. Prim back again.

It was July now, we say; and July in London, though Byron says,

‘The English winter ending in July,
To recommence in August,’

to the lady’s mind was associated only with dinners, concerts, races, balls, the opera, garden parties, and so forth, all of which she was relinquishing for an apparently hopeless purpose, while she knew that all her fashionable friends would be having strange surmises on the cause of this most unusual rustication, and inquiring of each other, ‘What are the Fettercairns about?’

Dulcie was painfully sensible that the lady of the house had become cold, stiff, and most exacting in manner to her, even condescending to sneer at times, with a well-bred tone and bearing that some high-born ladies can assume when they wish to sting dependants or equals alike.

Finella’s other grandmother, my Lady Drumshoddy, had ceased to be quite so indignant at her repulsion to Shafto, as she had a nephew—son of a sister—coming home on

leave from India ; and she thought perhaps the heiress might see her way to present herself and her thousands to young Major Ronald Garallan, of the Bengal Lancers, who had the reputation of being a handsome fellow and a regular ‘lady-killer.’

Days and days and long weary weeks passed by—weeks of longing—and no word of hope, of love, or apology came to Finella across the seas from distant Africa, evolved as she hoped by the letter of Dulcie to Florian, and her heart grew sick with hope deferred, while more battles and skirmishes were fought, and she knew not that a vessel with the mail containing that missive which Florian posted at the orderly-room tent had been cast away in the Bight of Benin, and that the bags had been saved with extreme difficulty.

She contemplated Vivian Hammersley facing danger in battle and sickness in camp, marching and toiling in trackless regions, with one belief ever in his angry heart that she had been false to him—she who loved him more truly and passionately every day. So time

seemed to pass monotonously on, and her unsatisfied longing to be justified grew almost to fever heat; and death might take him away before he knew of her innocence. She tried to be patient, though writhing under the evil eyes of Shafto, the author of all this mischief.

Could it be that Vivian had been driven away from her for ever? Daily she brooded over the unhappy story of her apparent fault and its bitter punishment, and she would seem to murmur in her heart, 'Come back to me, my darling. Oh, how am I to live on thus without you?'

And amid all this no sense of pride or mortification came to support her.

By the two girls the Cape news was, of course, closely and nervously watched. The tidings of Florian's promotion stirred the hearts of both; but to anyone else in Craigengowan it was, of course, a matter of profound indifference, if remarked at all.

A telegram briefly announced, without details, that Captain Hammersley had been wounded after the skirmish at the Euzangon-

yan Hill, but nothing more, as the papers were filled by the death of the Prince Imperial ; so, in the absence of other information, the heart of Finella was wrung to its core.

At last there came a morning when, in the house postal-bag, among others at breakfast, Shafto drew forth a letter for Dulcie.

‘A letter for Miss Carlyon from the Cape,’ he exclaimed ; ‘what a lot of post-marks ! Have you a friend there ?’

‘One,’ said Dulcie in a low voice ; and, with a sigh of joyous expectation, like a throb in her bosom, she thrust it into her bodice for perusal by-and-by, when no curious or scrutinizing eyes were upon her, after she had duly performed the most important duty of the day, washing and combing Snap, the pug ; and the action was seen by Shafto, who smiled one of his ugly smiles.

When, after a time, she was at leisure, Finella drew near her, expectant of some message.

‘Come with me, quick,’ said Dulcie ; ‘I have a letter for you !’

‘For me ?’

‘ Enclosed in Florian’s.’

Quick as their little feet could take them, the girls hurried to a secluded part of the shrubberies, where stood a tree known as Queen Mary’s Thorn. Often when visiting her nobles, the latter had been requested to plant a tree, as if emblematical of prosperity, or in order that its owners might tend and preserve it in honour of their illustrious guest.

Such a tree had been planted there by Queen Mary in the days of the old and previous family, when on her way north to Aberdeen in the eventful year 1562, when she rode to Inverness on horseback. Her room is still pointed out in the house of Craigengowan, and tradition yet tells in the Howe of the Mearns that, unlike the beer-drinking Elizabeth (who boxed her courtiers’ ears, and would have made Mrs. Grundy grow pale when she swore like a trooper), thanks to her exquisite training at the court of Catharine de Medici, her grace and bearing at table were different from those of her rival, who helped herself from a platter without fork or spoon, and tore the flesh from the

roast with her teeth, like a Soudanese of the present day.

But, as Lord Fettercairn was greatly bored by tourists and artists coming in quest of this thorn-tree, under which the girls now seated themselves, and he could not make money out of it, at a shilling a head, like his Grace of Athole for a glimpse of the Falls of Bruar, he frequently threatened (as he cared about as much for Queen Mary as he did for the Queen of Sheba) to have it cut down, and would have done so long since, but for the intervention of old Mr. Kippilaw the nationalist.

The delight of Dulcié on unfolding her epistles was only equalled by the delight and gratitude of Finella on receiving hers.

‘Oh Dulcie, Dulcie!’ ran the letter of Florian (with the whole of which we do not mean to afflict the reader), ‘while here—thousands of miles away from you—how often my heart sickens with hungry longing for a sight of your face—for the sound of your voice, the sound I may never hear again; for in war time we know not what an hour

may bring forth, or on each day if we shall see to-morrow. But, for all that, don't be alarmed about me. I have not the smallest intention of departing this life prematurely, if I can help it. I'll turn up again, never fear, darling—assegais, rifles, and so forth, nevertheless. The chances of our lives ever coming together again seemed very small when first we parted, yet somehow, dear Dulcie, I am more hopeful now ; and something more may turn up when we least expect it ; and we never know what a day may bring forth.'

Florian was far, far away from her, yet the sight of his letter, perhaps the first he had ever written to her, gave the lone Dulcie, for a time, a blissful sense of love and protection she had never felt since that fatal morning when she found her father dead 'in harness'—dead at his desk. Oh, that she could but lay her head on Florian's breast !

And as Finella read and re-read Hammersley's letter a bright, sweet, happy smile curved her lips—the lips that he had kissed in that

first time of supreme happiness, that now seemed so long, long ago.

‘I have been cruel, hard, suspicious,’ wrote Hammersley, ‘till that fine young fellow, then a sergeant of ours—the sergeant of my squadron—a lad of birth and breeding evidently, showed me the letter of Miss Carlyon—at least that part of it which referred to us, darling. I did not know till then how bitterly I had been deceived, and how we had both been imposed upon. Pardon me for the cruel note I wrote you, and forgive me. But, Finella, as we have often said before, what view will your people take of us—of me? I am not quite a poor man, though very much so when compared with you. Think if monetary matters were reversed, and you accepted a rich man who asked you to wed him, would not people say it was his money you wanted?’

‘Fiddlesticks!’ whispered Finella parenthetically; ‘what matters it what people say, if we love each other? We marry to please ourselves, Vivian, not them!’

‘There are some arts that come by intui-

tion to some people,' continued Hammersley, 'and, by Jove! darling, that of soldiering has come to your friend Miss Carlyon's admirer. His career will be a sure one; not that I believe the marshal's baton is often found in the knapsack of Tommy Atkins. He was an enigma to me; his youth and all that belonged thereto seemed dead and buried—his past a secret, which he cared about revealing to none; but such are the influences of camp life and camaraderie that I drew to him, and now I am as familiar with the name of little Dulcie with the golden hair—golden, is it not?—as yourself; so give her a kiss for me. I owe her much—I owe her the happiness of my life in dispelling the dark cloud that rose between us—in taking the load from my heart that made me blind and desperate, so that it is a marvel that I have not been killed long ago.'

As she read on, to Finella it seemed that it was all a dream that there ever had been any bitterness between them at all; that his fierce, short note, pencilled in haste and delivered by the butler, had ever existed, or that

he had left her abruptly and hastily, without a word or a glance of tenderness—not even uttering her name, perhaps, the musical name he was wont to linger over so lovingly ; that he had ever gone from her in a natural and pardonable tempest of anger and jealousy.

And now how well and fondly she could recall their first introduction in London, though it seemed so long ago, when their eyes first met with a sudden and subtle understanding, ‘and their glances seemed to mingle as two gases meet and take fire,’ as a writer says quaintly ; and though they had spoken but little then, and well-bred common-places only, each had felt that there were looks and tones untranslatable, yet full of sweet and hidden meaning to the sensitive.

For a time, as if loth to go back to the work-a-day world, both girls sat under Queen Mary’s Thorn, each with letter in hand, lost in a maze of happy dreams. They could see the shrubberies and the woods about the mansion in all the glory of midsummer, the smooth spaces of emerald greensward, the balustraded terrace with its stately flights of

steps, and the pool below it, where the white waterlilies and the white swans floated in sunshine; but all was seen dreamily, and to their ears like drowsy music came the hum of the honey-bee and the twittering and voices of the birds, while a beloved name hovered on the soft lips of each, and seemed to be reproduced in the songs of the linnet and thrush.

‘You will write to Captain Hammersley, Finella,’ said Dulcie, suddenly breaking the silence; ‘write to him and supplement all I have written to Florian. You see he is too good, too brave, not to be completely forgiving.’

‘He has nothing to forgive,’ said Finella, with just a little soupçon of pride.

‘Well, of course not; and his heart has come back to you again, if it ever left you, when he knows that you love him only, and loved him always.’

‘He sends you a kiss, Dulcie!’ said Finella, pressing her lips to the girl’s soft cheek.

‘Be brave, Vivian,’ urged Finella, when

she wrote her letter; 'I mean to be so, so far as I am concerned, and do not be discouraged by any opposition on the part of grand-mamma. I am rich enough to please myself. Let us have perfect confidence in each other, and we shall realize our dearest hopes, if God spares you to me. Oh, you dear, old, passionate silly!—to run away in a furious pet, as you did from Craigengowan, without seeking a word of explanation. How much all this has cost me, Heaven alone knows; but it is all over now.'

Her long and loving letter was despatched—posted by her own hand.

'But his wound—his wound—when shall I hear more of that?' was her ever-recurring thought.

Now Shafto had seen the Cape letter ere Dulcie had time to conceal it in her bosom, and watching both girls, he had seen them intent on their missives under the shade of Queen Mary's Thorn. So, knowing that Dulcie's letter could only be from Florian, intent on making mischief, he went to Lady Fettercairn, whom he found in her luxurious

boudoir, and asked her if she 'approved of her companion corresponding with private soldiers.'

'Certainly not,' replied the dame sharply; 'was her letter this morning from such?'

'I am certain of it.'

'This is excessively bad form!' she exclaimed, reclining in a blue satin easy-chair, with one slim white hand caressing the smooth, round head of her goggle-eyed pug dog. 'Send her here.'

'So you have a military correspondent, Miss Carlyon, I understand?' said she, when the culprit appeared.

'Yes, my Lady Fettercairn,' replied Dulcie, colouring painfully.

'Is he a relation?'

'No; you saw, and—and were struck with his likeness in my locket,' faltered poor Dulcie.

'Well—I do not approve, while under my roof, of your corresponding with private soldiers, or sergeants, and so forth!'

'But my letter is from an officer of the

24th Regiment,' said Dulcie, with a little pardonable pride.

'So much the worse perhaps—an officer?'

'Lieutenant Florian MacIan.'

'Indeed,' said Lady Fettercairn, languidly fanning herself; 'I remember the name now—he was so called after the girl MacIan,' she added half to herself. 'MacIan! what a name! It is quite a calamity. I do not care to have you corresponding with these people—while here,' she added vaguely.

Dulcie was on the point of reminding her that the unfriended Florian was the cousin-german of Shafto, but disdained to do so when the latter so selfishly forgot that matter herself, and bowing, withdrew in silence—too happy to feel mortified.

When she and Finella went to bed that night, though each knew every word of her letter by heart—they slept with them under their pillows—yea and for many a night—that they might have them at hand to read the first thing in the morning, so simply sentimental had the proud Finella and the fond little Dulcie become!

Dulcie's head was on her pillow, over which her red-golden hair was tossed in glorious confusion ; but no eyes saw it, save perhaps those of the man in the moon, the silver light of which shone on the carpeted floor, and then slowly stole upward in a white line upon her white coverleted bed, and ere long its soft and tender radiance fell upon the equally soft and tender face of the young girl, whose heavy dark lashes lay close on her rounded cheeks, and whose rosebud lips were parted and smiling, for she had a happy dream, born of her letter—a dream of Revelstoke and the old days there with Florian, ere grief, sorrow, separation, and the bitter realities of life came upon them.

CHAPTER III.

IN THE HOWE OF THE MEARNS AGAIN.

DULCIE was light of foot, young, bright, and active, yet with all her lightness and activity, times there were now when she failed to fly fast enough for Madame's smelling-bottle, her fan, her Shetland shawl, her footstool, or down-pillow, especially when the latter had her headache, or that *migraine* which could only be cured in the atmosphere of Belgravia, and made her at times also most irritable with Finella.

Dulcie could play well and sing well too, not being one of those who think that, so long as the music of a song is heard, the words are quite unnecessary; but Lady Fettercairn 'snubbed' her attempts at either, and openly hinted that it was as much out

of place for a 'companion,' however highly accomplished or trained, to seat herself at a piano in the drawing-room as to ride about the country lanes with a daughter of the house; but Dulcie, who was neither highly accomplished nor trained, but self-taught merely, so far as her music went, could scarcely believe that Lady Fettercairn meant steadily to mortify and humble her, till one day, when she thought she was alone, and was idling over the keys of the piano, singing softly to herself a verse of a little old song, that was a favourite of Florian's, and seemed applicable to herself :

‘I saw her not as others did,
Her spirits free and wild ;
I knew her heart was often sad
When carelessly she smiled ;

‘Although amid a happy throng
Her laugh was often loud ;
I knew her heart, her secret soul,
By secret grief was bowed,’—

she stopped suddenly on finding the cold and inquiring blue eyes of Lady Fettercairn focusing her with her eyeglass. Indeed, in a somewhat undignified manner, Madame

seemed constantly on the watch for her now, and was always appearing at unexpected times and in unexpected places.

‘Please to cease this English ballad, Miss Carlyon; it sounds as if more suited to the atmosphere of the servants’ hall than my drawing-room, I think.’

‘I thought I was alone,’ replied Dulcie, colouring deeply at this sharp and wanton rebuke; and with tremulous hands she softly closed the piano and stole away, with difficulty restraining her tears, and hastened to her first morning work—the washing and combing of Snap, the fat little ill-natured pug, with an apoplectic-like neck, who was furnished with a beautiful collar of silver and blue enamel, and usually took his repose in a mother-of-pearl basket, lined with blue satin, in the boudoir; and Snap had a pedigree longer than that of the Melforts of Fettercairn, and, unlike theirs, was not tarnished by political roguery.

Impulsive Dulcie had, as we have shown, unintentionally wound herself round the heart of the equally impulsive Finella, for she

had an honest English truthfulness about her which, united to her naturally happy and loving nature, made her generally irresistible ; and now the girls had a powerful secret tie of their own between them, and to Finella Dulcie carried her complaints of her treatment.

‘ No woman of heart—no lady would be intentionally unkind to you, Dulcie,’ urged Finella.

‘ Not positively so ; but she might by a glance or a word remind me of utter dependence for food and clothing in a way that would be felt more keenly than an open insult ; and, truth to tell, Lady Fettercairn speaks out plainly now. And then,’ added Dulcie with perfect simplicity, ‘ a governess or companion, if pretty, is so liable to be snubbed.’

But the petty tyranny was continued from time to time.

Dulcie feared the dog Snap, yet, as she had been accustomed to have pets at home in Revelstoke, she succeeded in teaching it a few tricks, and rewarding the educational efforts by biscuits and lumps of sugar. Snap

ere long would sit erect on his hind legs with a morsel balanced on the point of his remarkably short black nose ; and when she said, ‘ Ready—present—fire,’ and clapped her little hands, he shot it upward and caught it skilfully with a snap in descending.

With girlish glee she was showing this feat to Finella, when Lady Fettercairn appeared and said with a hard, metallic voice :

‘ Please not to teach my poor dog these vulgar tricks, Miss Carlyon ; these words of command—did you learn them from your friend the corporal, or sergeant, or what is he ?’

‘ Grandmamma !’ exclaimed Finella, in a voice of astonishment and reproach, while Dulcie’s heart swelled and her eyes filled with tears, and as usual she withdrew. ‘ How can you speak thus to her ?’ asked Finella.

‘ I mean what I say,’ was the cold response ; ‘ moreover, as you seem in her confidence, perhaps you will be good enough to tell her that if I permit her in the drawing-room, occasionally to make herself useful when a

little music or a hand at cards is wanted, she must not wear low bodies or short sleeves on any occasion,' added Lady Fettercairn, who had detected the eyes of more than one male guest wander appreciatively to the beautiful arms of Dulcie, that shone like polished alabaster, especially when contrasted with her black mourning costume.

And when Lady Fettercairn took the trouble to be ill, which was pretty frequently now, as she was worried by being kept away so long from London and London gaieties, for no purpose or end, apparently, so far as Finella and Shafto were concerned, she established a headache as a domestic institution, during the prevalence of which no one was to address her on any subject whatever—more than all, no one was to cross her. But Shafto's extravagance and growing evil habits were becoming a source of perpetual thought to the Craigengowan household now.

If Dulcie had her troubles, so had also Finella, for the family scheme 'anent' Shafto was always cropping up from time to time.

Thus, when that young gentleman, who had a very indifferent seat in his saddle, got a terrible ‘spill’ one day, in leaping a hedge, and was brought home in a very prostrate condition, which his addiction to wine considerably enhanced, the episode gave the cold, selfish, and unpatriotic peer, who had no great love for his newly found heir, some cause for thought and consideration.

Failing heirs male, the Peerage of Fettercairn, being a Scottish one, made before the Union, would go to Finella in the female line (as so many similar peerages do, to the endless confusion of family names and interests), and to the heirs male of her body.

It was a kind of consolation, but a sad one. Whom might she marry? ‘That fellow Vincent Hammersley perhaps!’

‘Finella,’ said Lord Fettercairn, in his hard, dry voice, and with the nearest attempt at a caress that ever escaped him, ‘if aught was to happen to Shafto—which God forbid!—you will be the heiress to the title and estates.’

‘ Oh, don’t talk thus, grandpapa !’ she exclaimed.

‘ You care for the old name, child !’

‘ I do indeed, grandpapa.’

‘ And would make a sacrifice for it, if necessary ?’

‘ Believe me, I would !’

‘ To please me ?’

‘ Yes.’

‘ You are a good girl, Finella. I wish then for you, apart from Shafto, who seems going to the dogs,’ he muttered bitterly, ‘ to marry some worthy and suitable man, such as I shall select for you,’ he added sententially, and thinking, but not speaking, of the home-coming Major Ronald Garallan.

‘ Indeed, grandpapa, I will do no such thing,’ said the wilful little beauty, firing up ; ‘ I would rather select a husband for myself.’

‘ A day will come, girl,’ said he, with an air of undisguised annoyance, ‘ when you will thank your grandmother and me, when thinking of all this matter, so necessary for consideration, when so much wealth and rank are involved. You are a good and a

bright little pet, Finella, and I would not urge these matters on your consideration but for your own good.'

Yet Finella only sighed wearily, and thought of getting away from Craigengowan, and viciously twisted up her laced handkerchief with her nervous little hands.

But if Lord Fettercairn was beginning to be hopeless of the affair of Shafto and Finella, it was not so with the Lady of that Ilk ; she was still bent upon her matrimonial plans, and as a part thereof she remonstrated in a somewhat unfeeling way with the innocent and unoffending Dulcie, who became desperate in consequence.

Until now, when she became the object of unworthy suspicions, she had been contentedly enjoying the present, made all the more pleasant to her by the friendship of Finella, not troubling herself too much about the future, nor indeed would the question of that, if it meant ways and means, have been very reassuring to her. She could only indulge in the visions of 'love's young dream,' and no more, as yet.

‘Your future is a serious consideration,’ said Shafto one day, with reference to the subject, as he was airing his figure, with the aid of a stick, on the terrace.

‘What does it matter to you—what do you care about it?’ asked Dulcie impatiently.

‘A man must always feel interested in the future of a girl he loves, or has loved, even though she has deliberately thrown him over, and flouted him, as you have always done me.’

‘I never could nor can I care for you, even as a friend; so simply cease this old annoyance, please,’ she said angrily.

‘Beware, I say again,’ said he, with knitted brows.

‘Oh, you have been manly enough to threaten me before, but you are not yet the master of Craigengowan, and may never be.’

This had only reference to his rash course of life, and was but one of several random speeches or shots made by Dulcie, which always terrified and maddened Shafto, who

suspected that in some mysterious way she knew more than he was aware of. At these times he could have strangled her, and now he grew pale with momentary rage.

‘I will no longer submit to your cruelty and cowardice,’ said Dulcie, her blue eyes flashing as she felt desperate.

‘What will you do—tell Lady Fettercairn?’ he sneered.

‘No.’

‘What then?’

‘That is my business,’ replied Dulcie, who, truth to say, was beginning to meditate a flight from Craigengowan—whither, she knew not and cared not.

Shafto was again silent and alarmed. With all his brilliant surroundings, he never knew what a day or night might bring forth.

‘After long experience of the world,’ says Junius, ‘I affirm before God that I never knew a rogue who was not unhappy.’

‘We always want what we cannot have, I suppose,’ said Dulcie, after a pause. ‘You

are like the fox and the grapes, Mr. Shafto, in more ways than one ; only the fox displayed superior sense by retiring when he found the coveted clusters beyond his reach, in persuading himself that they were sour ; hence I would advise you to imitate the proceedings of the fox.'

Shafto turned away and withdrew without a word, as he beheld the almost noiseless approach of Lady Fettercairn from a conservatory door, with her cold, steel-blue eyes, more steely than ever, her light-brown hair, and firm aristocratic lips.

Like most fair women, she looked much younger than her years, and, as we have said in an opening chapter her really fine face was without a line, as she had never had a cross or care in the world, save the alleged *mésalliance* of Lennard with Flora MacIan, and that, in a general way, was all forgotten now.

As she fixed her gaze on Dulcie, the expression of her face was hostile and lowering.

While feeling certain that something

unpleasant was impending, Dulcie tried to greet her with a smile, though 'the faculty of looking pleased when one's heart is sick unto death—of fulfilling with equanimity a hundred petty social exactions, which one's wearied soul loathes—is a talent verging on the border-land of genius.'

'Miss Carlyon,' began Lady Fettercairn, most freezingly, 'to my surprise I overheard you giving some advice in a remarkable and apparently very familiar way to my grandson, Mr. Shafto Melfort?'

The remark was a question; but before Dulcie, in her confusion, could form any reply, Lady Fettercairn spoke again.

'I have remarked, and intensely disapprove of these apparently secret meetings, conferences, or confidences, which you will, between persons in the very different relative positions of my grandson, young Mr. Melfort, and yourself, Miss Carlyon. They are, to say the least of them, very unseemly.'

'Lady Fettercairn!——' began Dulcie, almost passionately, and with crimsoned cheeks. But the dame, full of one idea

only, moved her head and resumed again, and pretty pointedly too :

‘ You are no doubt perfectly aware, as you have resided some months among us, that my grandson is destined for his cousin, Miss Melfort ; and if her friend—as you say you are—you are somewhat too much in his society.’

‘ Can I help it ?’ said Dulcie, in the dependency of her position compelled to temporize. ‘ I do not thrust mine on him—quite the reverse, Lady Fettercairn.’

‘ Finella does not seem to affect her cousin, I regret to say.’

‘ I think so too.’

‘ Thus, if she has mortified him, his heart may be easily caught on the rebound.’

‘ By *me* ?’ asked Dulcie, in a straightforward manner.

‘ Yes,’ replied Lady Fettercairn, sharply and icily.

‘ My position in your house will never permit me to dishonour myself.’

‘ Hoity-toity—dishonour !’

‘ A girl who would seek to ensnare a man

—as you hint—for wealth or position, certainly does dishonour herself. Death were better than such a life as this!’ murmured Dulcie wearily.

‘What do you mean by death, Miss Carlyon? I overheard your remark; it is not fashionable or good form to talk of such unpleasant things, so please don’t do it in future. Besides, at twenty, no one dies of grief or of mock-sentiment, believe me. A little time will show me whether you are or are not the real friend of Miss Melfort, and whether you have not been, perhaps, too long here.’

‘Too long, indeed, for my own peace,’ said Dulcie, in a broken voice.

‘I am responsible for the consequences, if he chooses to make a fool of himself with you,’ said Lady Fettercairn, mistaking the meaning of Dulcie’s speech.

‘What *do* you mean, madam?’ asked the latter, as a desperate and hunted feeling came over her.

‘I am scarcely bound to explain myself, but might act,’ replied Lady Fettercairn,

astonished and almost discomfited by this audacity on the part of a dependant, 'especially so far as you are concerned. If I mistake not, I employed you, Miss Carlyon, to be my useful companion, and not to act as a mistress to my grandson, and to turn your gifts of beauty or accomplishments to the use you are doing.'

'Oh, this is indeed torture!' exclaimed Dulcie, as hot tears rushed to her eyes; and as she thought of what her real relations were with Shafto, and how she loathed him, she exclaimed with genuine agony, 'how can you—how dare you be so cruel?'

'Miss Carlyon, this tone to me? You forget yourself.'

'No, Lady Fettercairn,' retorted Dulcie, with kindling cheeks and blue eyes sparkling through their tears; 'too well do I know, and have been made to feel, that I am a dependant in Craigengowan; but I brought into it a spirit as honest and independent as if our places had been reversed—I the rich lady and you my poor dependant.'

'If I wrong you I regret it,' said Lady

Fettercairn ; 'so here, for a time, let this unpleasant matter end.'

And, with a slight bow, she sailed away into the conservatory.

But Dulcie felt that there the matter could not and should not end, and she began to think seriously of flying from Craigengowan.

With a little stifled cry that broke from her quivering lips, Dulcie rushed down the steps of the terrace and fled through the shrubberies like a hunted animal, looking neither to the right nor left, till she reached the sequestered spot where stood Queen Mary's Thorn, and, flinging herself face downwards in the grass, she uttered again and again her father's name, as if she would summon him to her protection and aid, amid a flood of passionate tears—tears from the depths of her despair and intense humiliation.

Unmindful of the flight of time, or whether she was wanted for attendance on Lady Fettercairn or Snap, she lay there a whole hour, while the shadows of tree and shrub were lengthening round her. She thought her heart was breaking, so keen was her

sense of the affronts to which she had been subjected ; for, with all her sweet humility, Dulcie was not without innate dignity and pride ; and in this mournful condition she was found by Finella, who, suspecting from her grandmother's bearing and aspect that something was wrong, had kindly gone in search of her.

She raised her up, caressed and kissed her, and then heard her story with no small indignation, though she knew not what to do in the situation.

‘ I shall never, never forget you, Finella,’ sobbed Dulcie ; ‘ but when I leave this I know not what will become of me.’

‘ Leave this—why ?’

‘ Would you have me stay after what I have told you, and to be treated as I am by Lady Fettercairn ? But now, to me, it seems that the future of my life will be gloomy, indeed, and full of torture and sorrow.’

‘ Don't talk thus, Dulcie ; if ever a girl was made for happiness and to give it to others it is you, my plump little English pet !’ said Finella, taking Dulcie's tear-stained face be-

tween her pretty hands, and kissing it on both cheeks.

But Dulcie was determined to leave Craigengowan—to go that same night, indeed.

‘For where?’ asked Finella.

‘Anywhere—anywhere!’

‘Impossible!’

And Finella, by gentleness and kindness, soothed her over for a time, but a time only, and during that period she was relieved of the obnoxious presence of Shafto.

That personage found Craigengowan, when there were no guests thereat, especially such as he could lure into a game of *écarté*, or pool and pyramid, ‘deuced slow,’ so he took his departure for Edinburgh, where, as when in London, he often assumed the uncommon name of ‘Smith’ when involved, as he not unfrequently was, in rows and scrapes which he wished kept from the knowledge of Lord Fettercairn, and which sometimes led to his figuring before a presiding Bailie through the medium of the night-police.

CHAPTER IV.

EN ROUTE TO ULUNDI.

ON the 19th of June the Second Division, the operations of which were now combined with those of Sir Evelyn Wood's Flying Column, resumed its march to the front after the failure of certain nude ambassadors from Cetewayo to arrange with Lord Chelmsford, who, on the 16th—three days before his march began—had received the most mortifying intelligence that he was to be superseded in command of the South African Field Force by 'the coming man,' Lieutenant-General Sir Garnet Wolseley, ere whose arrival took place, he hoped to end the war by one vigorous blow delivered at Ulundi.

The troops were all in the highest spirits—full of fine ardour, and longing to wipe out

the stain cast upon them by the miserable fate of the Prince Imperial.

The first movement of the division was the ascent of the great and steep Ibabanango Mountain, and when that was accomplished, Sir Evelyn encamped on the left bank of the River Vemhlatuz, where open country stretched on the left flank towards where Fort Marshall was built, while the division encamped in his rear on ground where dwarf acacias grew, with tangled creepers, wild vines, and cane-like plants.

Service and exposure had now made deep the bronze of Florian's face and hands ; but the former had matured its expression, and the fine manliness of it ; a careless, not precisely a rackety life—but a camp life, with perils faced in the field—had made his features and bearing less boyish than they were when Dulcie bade him farewell at Revelstoke.

'A generous friendship no cold medium knows,' says Pope ; thus, when active operations were resumed, Florian became painfully conscious how much he missed Hammersley at the head of the squadron, a charge that

had now devolved upon himself; for Vivian's spirit of camaraderie and bonhomie, his manly, gentlemanly, and soldierly bearing in every way, with the little secret they had to share between them, even as with Dulcie and Finella at Craigengowan, formed an additional link.

When would they meet again? When would they greet each other, if ever, more? And while surmising thus he viewed with genuine regard the valuable ring bestowed on him by Hammersley, and patted with affection the fine charger with which he had also gifted him; but many more in the ranks of the old 24th missed Hammersley as well as Florian.

On the 20th occurred one of those skirmishes with the Zulus which were of daily occurrence.

Villiers, the young aide-de-camp, came with orders for the Irregulars, Buller's Horse, and Florian's little squadron of Mounted Infantry to reconnoitre the ground between two branches of the Umhlatoosi River, and for this purpose they quitted the camp as usual before dawn.

As they rode on in silence Florian's mind—for he was apt to get lost in thought—was dwelling on a legend he had heard, that the Zulu people were the descendants of certain shipwrecked seamen of a fleet which Pharaoh, King of Egypt, had sent to the Southern Sea, and that Zululand, some say Sofala, was the ancient Ophir, where forests of cedar and ebony grew, and gold, diamonds, and all manner of precious stones existed in certain geological strata.

As the Mounted Infantry rode on over ground where troops had never ridden before, herds of spiral-horned koodoos, of eland, of hartebeest and the striped zebra went scampering before them.

‘What sport we might have here had we not other work in hand!’ exclaimed an officer regretfully.

In two detachments they examined the hills on the flanks of the way which was to be the route of the division. Buller's Horse took those on the right; Florian's Infantry those on the left. The former soon unearthed some Zulus, who fired a ragged volley and

then vanished over a steep crest, where it was impossible to pursue them.

Skirmishes of this kind went on almost hourly till the 26th, when Florian became involved in what seemed a fatal catastrophe. It had now become evident to the Zulus that these continued advances of the Second Division menaced the great Royal Kraal of Ulundi. Thus more and more of them were visible daily. Their opposition was growing, and they made resolute attempts to burn up all the tall feathery grass along the route; and being dry as hay, it readily caught fire, to the peril of ammunition in the pouches, boxes in the gun-limbers and store-waggon.

On the 24th Sir Evelyn Wood's column had reached a place called the Jackal Ridge, and encamped on its summit, while the tents of the division were pitched at its base in a district where the valleys were full of beautiful green bushes, where cotton trees and castor-oil plants grew in the wildest luxuriance, and the tall scarlet spikes and spear-like leaves were varied by the green of the spek-

boom and the *melkbosh* or spurge plants of various kinds.

From the camp of the Flying Column on the summit of the ridge a great kraal, supposed to be Ulundi, was seen in the distance, the kraal of which traders and native scouts had circulated the most fabulous descriptions.

‘Vague stories of the wealth of the king went about,’ says Captain Thomasson, adjutant of Buller’s Irregular Cavalry. ‘Splendid visions of loot in the shape of ivory, ostrich feathers, and diamonds filled the soldiers’ eyes. Incredible stories of the amount of treasure taken at Isandhlwana were circulated. It is needless to say these golden visions were broken, not a man of the regulars being a sovereign the better for any loot taken. Some of the irregulars got small sums from deserted kraals. The amount taken altogether was small. . . . From here a good view of Ulundi can be seen—the sight we have waited six long months for. The delight one felt must have been similar to that which animated the ten

thousand at the first sight of the sea. One was almost tempted to shout Ulundi! Ulundi! as they did Thalassa! Thalassa! From the same height we could see the sea in the far distance.'

Prior to attacking some kraals that were in front, on the 25th Sir Evelyn Wood's column pushed forward again, and crossed a stream by laying across it mattings of grass—a process that occupied fully seven hours—after which the Second Division followed.

Early on the morning of the 26th, the day we have referred to, Lord Chelmsford personally paraded a force to attack the enemy.

It consisted of two squadrons of the 17th Lancers, looking gay in their smart blue tunics, faced and broadly lapelled with white, their swallow-tailed banneroles fluttering out upon the wind; Buller's picturesque-looking Irregular Horse, Florian's Mounted Infantry, Major Bengough's wild-looking natives, with rifle, shield, and assegai, and two pieces of cannon.

The kraals to be attacked stood in a spacious valley, five miles distant from the camp, and a stern resistance was expected.

At a canter the horse and artillery took a circuitous route, and gained an eminence overlooking the kraals, which were speedily set on fire by shells, and, being of dry and inflammable material, were at once sheeted with red flame.

In each of these military kraals were two thousand five hundred huts, and the dark smoke from them ascended in separate columns of stupendous height into the clear and ambient African sky, and to avenge their destruction a great column of some thousands of Zulus, like a sombre, moving sea, studded with grey and glittering objects—bull-hide shields and assegai-blades—were seen advancing swiftly along the green and verdant valley.

‘This will be no crutch-and-toothpick business!’ exclaimed Villiers, the joyous young aide-de-camp, laughingly; ‘here they come,’ he added, looking through his field-glasses, ‘led by a tearing swell, with cranes’

pinions on his head, and no end of cows' tails at his waist, and a shield like a door, by Jove !'

The words had scarcely escaped him when his horse was shot under him, and he 'came a cropper,' as he phrased it, in doing so nearly swallowing his cigar.

But the Royal Artillery 9-pounders opened on them, plumping shell after shell into their dense dark masses, so they paused, wavered, faced about, and fled with the wildest precipitation, pursued by the fiery and active Redvers Buller, of the 60th Rifles (who had served in the China campaign of 1860, and with the Red River expedition under Sir Garnet Wolseley), at the head of his Irregular Horse, the Mounted Basutos, and Florian's Mounted Infantry.

On they went, over the maimed and torn, the dead and the dying, naked and bleeding. Many were shot and cut down on every side, and the casualties would have been more terrible but for the awful state of the atmosphere, which was steamy, hot, and laden with the overpowering fragrance of

sheets of tropical flowers and plants that clothed the two faces of the valley.

In the hot pursuit, as Florian was taking his horse over a watercourse by a flying leap, there occurred to him one of those mishaps which, from one circumstance or another, few horsemen have not experienced. In mid-leap, the fiery animal was suddenly scared by a huge black *aasvogel* (a kind of vulture), that flew upward from among the dwarf bushes with a vicious croak, and caused it to swerve under him in the saddle, giving his whole frame a painful wrench that, without a wound or bruise, rendered him for the time incapable of riding a yard further, and with difficulty he dismounted.

What was to be done? Advance with the mounted men under Buller he could not, neither could he return rearward to the camp, now some eight miles distant, alone !

In a solitary hut of the nearest kraal—a hut that had escaped the conflagration of the rest—he was placed till the force could pick him up on its return. There Tom Tyrrell placed a cloak over him, loaded his revolver,

and left him to continue the pursuit ; while his charger—the gift of Hammersley—was meantime appropriated by Villiers, the staff officer.

Perfect rest made the acute pain he was enduring subside ; but he still felt weak and worn, and there he lay alone, amid utter silence now, ‘ building castles in the air, with conversations in the clouds ’—conversations with Dulcie, and castles for her to inhabit.

In the almost darkened hut, dome-shaped, and roofed with thatch and enormous leaves, and into which light came by the narrow wattle-framed door alone, he lay thinking of her, and the unpleasantness of her life at Craigengowan, and marvelled much what manner of place it was ; for, till her letter came, he had scarcely heard of it before, he felt assured. He thought, too, of the chances—the problem of their meeting again—and that problem stared him in the face in the light like an unsolved question, or the game that one goes to bed leaving unfinished ; but with him and with her it would be the most important move in the game of their young and

at present, divided lives—the lives and loves of two who were bound up in each other, all the more that they had no one to care for in this world save each other.

Meanwhile one anxious hour followed another, and there came no sound of troops on the sward—no clatter of accoutrements to announce that the pursuing Horse were returning his way,

The Second Division and Wood's Flying Column had marched to a mountain called the Entonjaneni, and there formed a camp about twenty miles distant from Ulundi as the crow flies. Vast quantities of thorn-bushes grew on the left of it, and before it spread an open plain; and to this camp came nearly the last envoys of Cetewayo, bearing two elephants' tusks as a sign of amity, promising a herd of cattle, and so forth. The tusks were declined, and the original conditions insisted on. However, Lord Chelmsford agreed to delay his final advance till the evening of the 29th of June.

Buller's Horse and the other mounted men were returning slowly from their long pursuit,

when they drew near the kraals so recently destroyed, and saw that one hut was burning still, and casting a lurid light against the evening sky. All thought this strange, as before the repulse of the Zulus in the valley the fire in every kraal was completely over, as there seemed nothing more left to burn.

Suddenly Tom Tyrrell cried out, in a voice of the keenest excitement :

‘ The hut in which we left our officer is in flames--the poor fellow will be burned to death !’

‘ Who ?’ exclaimed Villiers.

‘ Our poor officer—Lieutenant MacIan.’

‘ God ! you don’t say so !’

‘ See for yourself, sir.’

‘ It is too evidently as you say. Forward at a gallop !’

The flames were sinking fast when they reached the hut, now reduced to a smouldering heap of ashes, and the horrible odour of burned human flesh overpowered the perfume of the wild flowers, amid which the great bees were yet humming; and poking amid the hot *débris* with their lances, the men of the 17th

found the charred remains of what had been evidently a human body ; and though inured to war, to bloodshed, and daily human suffering, the soldiers looked blankly and inquiringly in each other's faces, pausing for orders, and wondering what was to be done now.

In the hut the luckless Florian had lain for a time on its clay-beaten floor listening for every sound. He had a natural fear of Zulus coming upon him suddenly and assegaiing him in cold blood—if indeed the blood of these fierce savages was ever cold till death seized them.

The idea was intolerable ; and he writhed on the hard floor and hearkened intently with his ear placed close thereto.

Shots in the far distance announced that fighting was going on somewhere — that Redvers Buller, the unwearied, was 'at it again'—but told him nothing more. What if the advanced troops were defeated—had to fall back towards the Entonjaneni Mountain by some other route, and had to abandon him to his fate ?

In war, of what value is one human life, save to the proprietor thereof?

Anon, amid these exciting and oppressive thoughts, he became conscious of a singular and awful odour pervading the place. He had knowledge enough of it by ample past experience to know that it came from the body of a dead Zulu. He peered about, and in a corner hitherto unnoticed, near a pile of fresh bull-hides, intended doubtless for conversion into long shields, partly covered by one, lay the corpse of a Zulu warrior, whose shaven head, with the military ring or fillet, and bare feet, with anklets of burnished copper, were visible.

Pah !

Such a companion as this proved too much for his nerves, and at all risks—the risk of being seen by scouting Zulus—he crawled out of the hut into the pure and grateful air of heaven, and contrived to reach a clump of dwarf mimosa-trees at a little distance on the slope of an eminence, and therein he lay to await the return of his comrades.

He had with him his water-bottle and a

brandy-flask ; and with the contents of these, a sandwich or two (from his haversack) made of tinned meat, and a ration of biscuit, he made a meal, as mid-day was now past, and, lighting a cigarette, strove to study the art of being patient.

As he lay there and smoked, numbers of insects, nameless to him — cicadas, huge moths and butterflies—huge in the tropics—buzzed and flitted about him ; small birds, the gold and emerald cuckoo, sunbird and finch, with beautiful plumage, flitted from branch to branch overhead ; a lizard or chameleon crawled along. Dazed by the heat, and under the influence of the latter, and perhaps of his cigarette, Florian dropped asleep.

From this he was startled by a trumpet sounding the advance, and was roused just in time to see the detachment consisting of the two Lancer Squadrons, the Mounted Infantry, Frontier Horse, and Bengough's Natives resuming their route to the camp, after investigating the ashes of the hut he had quitted, and which had no doubt caught fire from the

hot embers of others blown against it by the wind.

But Florian's heart sank within him at the contemplation of what might have *been* had he slept on—had the trumpet not been sounded, and the troops had ridden away, leaving him helpless in that solitude.

CHAPTER V.

THE LOADED DICE.

SHAFTO was located in a quiet hotel in St. Andrew Square, Edinburgh, whither he had come in hope to raise money to meet the difficulties in which he had become involved. When away from the splendid thraldom of Craigengowan—for thraldom he deemed it now—he was daily and nightly in the habit of imbibing more than he would have ventured to do there; thus he was becoming slow of speech, with the fishy eye and the fevered breath of the habitual tippler, even at his years, while in dress he adopted a style that was a curious combination of the dandy and the groom.

The many confiding tailors, jewellers, horse-copers, wine-merchants, and others

whom he had honoured by his patronage were now getting beyond all bounds with their importunity and—as he thought—impertinent desire to have their bills settled ; while, disgusted with him, Lord Fettercairn had been heard more than once to say, even to old Mr. Kippilaw :

‘ If Finella had been a boy I should not have cared so much about there being no other grandson of my own to ensure the succession and carry on the title.’

But the peer did not yet know the worst.

Occasional visits to Edinburgh, and still more those to London, were always involving Shafto in one or other disgraceful scrape ; for, notwithstanding a most liberal allowance, he was often at his wits’ end for money, and was over head and ears in gambling debts. Thus he was a bitter pill to the patriotic peer, his ‘ grandfather,’ and he was on the verge, he feared, of dire disgrace, as a whole lot of post-obits might soon come to light—on the fortune he reckoned would come to him on Lord Fettercairn’s death or his marriage with Finella ; for with two such prospects the

Jew money-lenders and other scoundrels who trade as such, in Pall Mall and elsewhere, under double names, had seen things in a 'rosy' light, and let him thus have 'no end of money.'

And now, as a means of recruiting his exchequer for a time, he bethought him of young Kippilaw, who had been left £30,000 unexpectedly by an uncle in Glasgow, and his first thought was to flatter and fleece the fellow if he could, though the spruce little W.S. was on the eve of his marriage with one of the many daughters of Lord Macowkay, the eminent senator of the College of Justice; so he invited that gentleman to a quiet little dinner at his hotel, 'Just to pick a bone—sharp eight.'

Little Kippilaw, who was always flattered by the society of a prospective peer, as something to talk about in the Parliament House, accepted with a radiant countenance; and, as he had rather a showy-looking friend who was passing through Edinburgh on his way to Drumshoddy Lodge, he asked permission to bring him.

‘Certainly, of course,’ said Shafto.

‘Major Garallan is a client of the firm.’

‘What! the old woman Drumshoddy’s nephew?’

‘The same.’

‘All right; let us have him.’

So the Major came in due course. He was the beau-ideal of a cavalry man—tall, handsome, well set up and put together, dark-complexioned and regular-featured, with his ears and neck scorched by the Indian sun to a hue in which red and bistre were blended; but an awkward accession he proved to Shafto eventually.

The dinner, with its soup, fish, and many entrées, was all that could be desired, from the curaçoa to the coffee, and put Shafto’s two guests in excellent humour with themselves and the world generally; the cloth was drawn, the wine and dessert put on, and, seated at the head of the table, Shafto almost forgot his troubles, as he took bumper after bumper of sparkling Pommery-greno, while from the tall windows could be seen the space of the stately square, with its tall

central column crowned by the colossal statue of Melville, and all its many-pillared and palatial banks and public offices whitened by the silver light of the summer moon.

The Zulu War was, of course, spoken of, the mishaps at Isandhlwana and Intombe discussed, though the subject was shirked by Shafto, who cared nothing about it, save in so far as the *danger* that then menaced Florian ; but little Kippilaw, who was a full-blown captain in the Queen's Edinburgh Rifle Brigade, talked a vast amount of 'shop' to the amused Major Garallan, whom he ventured to instruct in the 'new method of attack,' and thereby drew out the latter insensibly to talk a little of his Indian experiences, for he had served in the expedition to Perak, against the Malays, and the Jowaki expedition on the frontier of Peshawur, and been wounded at the storming of Jummoo ; affairs that, though small in themselves, went rather beyond a sham fight in the Queen's Park, including the storming of St. Anthony's Chapel and forming a rallying square in the Hunter's Bog.

And now the conversation began to flag, though Shafto had circulated the wine freely, and he thought the time had come to propose 'a little mild play.' One circumstance surprised him—that though they were supposed to be connected by marriage, the somewhat haughty Major never made the slightest reference to the subject.

'A quiet rubber of whist, with a dummy,' suggested Kippilaw.

'With a dummy, no,' said Major Garallan. 'I like poker, but——'

'Poker be hanged!' interrupted Shafto.

At this abrupt speech the Major, a well-bred man, pushed back his chair a little way, while Shafto paused and felt in his waistcoat-pocket a little white square ivory object—of which more anon.

It was arranged that Shafto and Kippilaw should have a mild game of *écarté*, while Major Garallan smoked, idled, and looked on, a course that the first-named gentleman by no means approved of, as, for cogent reasons, he had an intense dislike of having his play overlooked.

Kippilaw, inflamed by the wine he had taken inconsiderately—while Shafto, cautious to a degree, had not, to use a phrase of his own, ‘a hair of his coat turned’—allowed himself to be lured into doubling the stakes again and again; and Shafto, who had his own ultimate end in view, while playing to all appearance with intense care, allowed himself to lose eventually the sum of £500, for which, as he had not the most remote intention of paying it, he with great liberality gave an ‘I O U’ to Kippilaw, who, not being an habitual gamester, but by nature and profession cautious and gentlemanly in spirit, was rather scared in accepting the document.

Then a pause ensued in the game, during which more wine—Pommery-greno—was circulated, fresh cards produced, and Shafto invited the Major to play, but he declined somewhat curtly, as Shafto thought.

He then urged Kippilaw to let him have his ‘revenge,’ and the latter was willing enough to let him have back the I O U if he won it, or any portion thereof, as he disliked

to possess such a document signed by the son of a client of the firm, and thought secretly that he would not play a shilling beyond that sum ; but he had partaken of too much champagne, which, when the Major's back was turned, Shafto contrived to dash with brandy, and soon the demon of play, rivalry and acquisitiveness overruled the reason of Kippilaw ; but the nefarious action of Shafto had not been unnoticed by the Major, who had affected to be twirling his moustache by the aid of a mirror above the high black marble mantelpiece.

Shafto produced a dice-box ; he lost, and Kippilaw won, as it was intended he should, and a silly laugh of exultation escaped him.

‘ Another I O U—you're in luck's way to-night, Kippilaw ! ’ exclaimed Shafto.

‘ How much have I won ? ’

‘ A hundred and fifty. ’

The play went on—the dice-box rattled again and again, while the Major, with his back against the mantelpiece, looked silently and curiously, but darkly on. Shafto won back—what he had lost as a lure—his £500,

with wonderful celerity, and then another sum of £100, for which Kippilaw gave him a cheque, signed by a very unsteady hand.

‘Double or quits,’ said Shafto, staking the cheque, with his hand on the dice-box.

‘Thanks—but I don’t think I’ll play any more,” said Kippilaw.

‘Oh—indeed—please yourself,’ said Shafto scornfully, while biting his lips with anger and disappointment — ‘but after gaining £500 from me—the devil—are you afraid?’

‘No.’

‘What then?’

‘I have played enough—more deeply than I ever did before.’

‘Enough!’ repeated Shafto contemptuously.

‘Yes.’

‘Too much, indeed,’ said Major Garallan suddenly; ‘and, by Jove, you do right to stop, Kippilaw.’

‘What the devil do you mean?’ asked Shafto, becoming pale with sheer fury.

‘What I say,’ replied the officer coolly.

‘Who the —— gave you a right to interfere?’ demanded Shafto in a bullying tone.

‘I have watched your play, sir, for some time past,’ replied the Major quietly, ‘and know right well how and why the tide of fortune turned so suddenly in *your* favour.’

An oath escaped Shafto, and snatching up the cards, he hurled the pack to a remote corner of the room.

‘What does all this mean?’ asked Kippilaw, staring half tipsily and with a scared air at the speakers.

‘It means, you goose, that you have been playing with a fellow who is no better than a blackleg,’ said the Major, with quiet scorn. ‘No, *you don’t*,’ he added, grasping, as if with a smith’s vice, the wrist of Shafto, who, uttering a cry like a jackal, seized a cut-glass decanter, with the fell intention of hurling it at the speaker’s head, but the latter cowed him by one steady glance.

‘You shall repent this insolence,’ said Shafto, starting to his feet. ‘I will teach you to question a man of honour with impunity.’

‘Honour!’ laughed Garallan.

‘You shall hear from me, sir.’

‘In what fashion—an action at law?’

‘No ; one perhaps you may shrink from.’

‘Very probably. You don’t mean a duel ?’

‘I do.’

‘Where ?’

‘On the sands at Boulogne.’

‘Fool ! People don’t fight duels nowadays, and if they did, I am not required to fight with a—swindler ! That is the word, so let us hear no more high falutin. A man of honour, indeed !’

Garallan burst into a fit of scornful laughter, and Shafto, mad with rage and disappointment, was rushing to grasp the poker, when the former, in a moment, and before the apparently helpless Kippilaw could interfere, if able to do so, in any way, had struck his would-be opponent down, and wrenched from his left hand, which he tore open by main force, something that Shafto had attempted to put in his mouth, and which, on examination, proved to be—a loaded die.

CHAPTER VI.

SHAFTO'S HORIZON BECOMES CLOUDY.

THE Major had gone to the 'little dinner' at the desire of Kippilaw, but unwillingly; he had evidently heard something about Shafto—knew him by reputation, and during the meal had treated him perhaps rather cavalierly, which Shafto was too self-assertive or too 'thick-skinned' to perceive, though Kippilaw did.

The little W.S., who had never been in a 'scrimmage' since he left the High School, was desperately scared by the whole affair, and especially by the mauling given to Shafto, the son of a client of the firm, the heir of Lord Fettercairn, by the Major, who made very light of the matter, and called him 'a d——d cad, and worse than a cad.'

When Shafto gathered himself up they were gone, and he heard their footsteps echoing in the now silent square (where the tall column stood up snowy white in the light of the waning moon) as they turned westward along George Street, and a feeling closely akin to that of murder gathered in his heart as he poured the most horrible maledictions on the Major, and drank a deep draught of foaming Pommery-greno, well laced with brandy.

That fellow had spoiled his game, and his nefarious plans against young Kippilaw, whom he regarded as a wealthy pigeon to pluck. No good ever came of a quiet third party watching one's play. He would be even with the Major yet, he muttered, as he ground his teeth ; but how ? The Major had carried off the loaded dice, and after splitting it open, as doubtless he would, exposure everywhere was sure to follow.

He was wrong in one supposition, however, as the Major quitted Edinburgh next morning for Drumshoddy Lodge, and, of course, would be very unlikely to expose in

public one whom he deemed a connection of his own.

Intending to attribute the whole affair of the loaded dice—alleged to be loaded, he would insist—to a tipsy brawl on the Major's part, to a mistake or confusion, and carry it off somehow, Shafto, driven to desperation by want of money on one hand, even to settle his hotel bill in St. Andrew Square, and by some days of terrible doubt and depression on the other, after writing a private note to Mr. Kenneth Kippilaw about his affairs, and fixing an hour for a visit 'there-anent,' ventured to present himself at that gentleman's chambers, where a shock awaited him.

As he passed through the hall, he saw Madelon—Madelon Galbraith—seated in a waiting-room.

'Madelon here—for what purpose?' thought he, with growing anxiety, as he was ushered into the presence of Mr. Kippilaw, who received him with intense frigidity—even more than frigidity—as he barely accorded him a bow, and neither offered his hand nor rose

from his writing-table, but silently pointed to a chair with his pen.

Despite this cold welcome, Shafto's constitutional insolence of thought and bearing came to him with a sense of the necessity for action, for his grim reception by the usually suave and pleasant old lawyer roused all his wrath and spite to fever-heat.

‘So—so, sir,’ began the latter, ‘so you, the heir to the estates and title of Fettercairn, actually tried to rob my simple son by means of a loaded dice till exposed by Major Garallan, to whom my warmest gratitude is due ; the split fragments are now in my possession ; but I presume it was not on that matter you came to consult me. And, not content with such vile conduct, you sought to taunt, bully, and inveigle the Major into a duel, in which perhaps your superior skill or cunning might achieve his murder. Duels, however, are out of date ; but penal servitude is not, so beware, Mr. Shafto—beware, I say—there is a rod in pickle for you, I suspect.’

And as he spoke the keen, glittering eyes

of the old lawyer glared at Shafto above the rims of his *pince-nez*.

‘ But you come to confer with me about your private debts, Mr. Shafto,’ he added, lowering his tone.

‘ Yes.’

‘ You know the total amount, I presume ?’

‘ Scarcely.’

‘ How so ?’

‘ Well, when letters come to me I open the white envelopes and chuck all the d——d blue ones into the fire uninspected.’

‘ A sensible proceeding—very ! How long can it go on ?’

‘ I don’t know—perhaps you do,’ was the dogged reply.

As if it was useless to ask further questions, Mr. Kippilaw looked over some papers which Shafto had sent for his consideration, and his countenance lowered and his white bushy eyebrows became closely knitted as he did so, while Shafto watched him with an aspect of languid interest which he was far from feeling, and sucked the ivory head of his crutch-stick the while.

‘Why, Mr. Shafto,’ said Mr. Kippilaw, ‘this is rank dishonesty.’

‘What is?’

‘This mess I am contemplating.’

‘Don’t talk thus to me; the greatest robbers in the world, after one’s own family lawyers——’

‘Sir!’ interrupted Mr. Kippilaw, smiting the table with his hand, and looking dangerous.

‘To business, then,’ said Shafto sulkily.

‘There’s this bill of Reuben Levi, the London money-lender, of which I have a note, drawn originally for £500, at three months, bearing interest at sixty per cent., and renewed three times!’

‘Well?’

‘The money value to the drawer is not likely to be much at the close of the precious transaction.’

‘D——n, I think not.’

‘Lord Fettercairn will have to take up these.’

‘A few more too, I suspect,’ groaned Shafto.

‘ This is quite as disgraceful as your affair of the cards at that Club in Princes Street.’

‘ Which ?’

‘ When you were found playing baccarat with ever so many cards too much in the pack. I am sick of you and your affairs, as you call them. The man who can act as you do, in these and other matters, is not likely to discharge the duties that devolve on the proprietor of Craigengowan and the title of Fettercairn, alike teeming with temptations ; therefore I think his lordship will put it out of your power to make ducks and drakes of the inheritance, if he takes my advice.’

‘ *Your* advice !’ thundered Shafto.

‘ Precisely so,’ said Mr. Kippilaw quietly, as he thrust all Shafto’s papers into a drawer and locked it. ‘ Lord Fettercairn has lost all patience with you, sir. People should not incur debts they are unable to pay. I know of no action more mean or contemptible than to make some man—a poor one, perhaps—lose for another’s amusements and enjoyments. You ought to consider this.’

‘ Thank you, Mr. Kippilaw. You are, I

believe, a leading elder in your kirk, whatever that may mean; but I'll not have you preach to me.'

'A man should do anything rather than defraud his neighbour.'

'D——n you, you old cur! do you speak of "defrauding" to me—you, a lawyer?' said Shafto, grasping his cane.

'I do,' replied Mr. Kippilaw firmly. Shafto quailed under his gaze, and turned to leave the room. 'Mr. Gyle!' said the lawyer, ere he could do so.

Shafto turned and faced him.

'Ha!—you answer to your *name*, I see!'

'What do you mean?'

'Simply that I begin to think you are an impostor!'

Shafto glared at him, white with rage and dismay, while a minute's silence ensued.

Perhaps the astute lawyer had read that remarkable essay by Lord Bacon on cunning, wherein he tells us that an unexpected question or assertion may startle a man and lay him open. 'Like to him,' he continues, 'that having changed his name, and was

walking in St. Paul's, another came behind him, and called him suddenly by his true one, whereat straightways he looked back.'

'An impostor, dare you say?' exclaimed Shafto, taking one pace to his front.

'Considering your conduct, I begin to think so.'

Shafto felt for a moment or so relieved, and said:

'What the devil do you mean? You had a properly attested certificate of my birth?'

'Attested—yes.'

'Was that not all-sufficient, even for your legal mind?'

'Not—now.'

'Why not now?'

'Because I remember that it is mutilated.'

Shafto winced.

'It is there, however,' said Mr. Kippilaw, pointing with his pen to a green charter box labelled 'Fettercairn,' and Shafto thought that if he did not adopt a high tone he might fail in the matter.

'You scoundrel,' he exclaimed, as he smashed his cane on the writing-table,

scattering letters and documents in every direction ; 'doubt of my identity is an insult now !'

Mr. Kippilaw did not lose his temper ; he puckered up his eyebrows, actually smiled, and looked cunningly at Shafto as he pulled or twitched his nether lip with a finger and thumb. He was evidently reconsidering the situation in his own mind, and coming to the conclusion that there was a mistake somewhere.

Shafto was sharp enough to read this at a glance ; he thought of Madelon, and his heart became filled with black fury.

'I think our interview is ended,' said Mr. Kippilaw quietly, as he dipped a pen in the ink-bottle and laid his left hand on a bell. 'You will be good enough to leave my chambers, sir, or I shall have you shown out by the hall-porter.'

There was nothing left for him but to withdraw, and as he did so, Madelon Galbraith, who had been evidently waiting an interview, entered Mr. Kippilaw's room, and as she passed she gave Shafto a terrible

glance with her black, sparkling eyes—a glance of hatred and triumph—as she had not forgotten, but remembered with true Highland bitterness, the day of her rough expulsion from Craigengowan, when he had actually hounded a dog upon her.

Shafto shivered; he felt as if an iron network was closing round him, and that a fierce legal light might yet be cast on his secret villainy.

Guilt does not always look to the future. It is as well perhaps, under any circumstances, that we never can see that mystic but certain period.

Smarting under Shafto's unbridled insolence to himself, and acting very probably on some information accorded to him by Madelon Galbraith, whom he desired to remain at his house in Edinburgh, Mr. Kippilaw took means to achieve more—means which he should have adopted immediately after his first interview with Shafto.

Discomfited, there was nothing left for the latter now but to cast himself on the mercy of Lord and Lady Fettercairn in the matter

of his debts and involvements; and this, after a few days of doubt, irresolution, and much hard drinking, he resolved to do, and so set out for Craigengowan.

In these few days the strands of Fate had been twisting slowly but surely into a fatal coil !

CHAPTER VII.

THE SQUARE AT ULUNDI.

IN the camp at the Entonjaneni Mountain the troops had two entire days' rest, which enabled Florian to recover completely from the effects of the accident which had befallen him in the pursuit of the Zulus.

In the afternoon of the 28th a telegram came announcing to Lord Chelmsford that Sir Garnet Wolseley had arrived, that he had assumed the entire command, and requesting a plan of the campaign, which, apparently, Lord Chelmsford, having conducted thus far, was resolved to finish for himself, as he did.

With the same messengers came the mails for the troops, and, to Florian's delight, there came a letter from Dulcie—we say delight at

first, for that sentiment soon gave place to one of anxiety.

At the sight of her handwriting, his heart went back in a day-dream to the banks of the Yealm and the Erme and to the exquisite Devonshire lanes where they had been wont to wander hand in hand together—lanes bordered by banks of pale green ferns, while the golden apples hung in clusters overhead.

Isolated now amid the different worlds in which each lived, these two were tenderly true to each other, at those years when they who have been boy and girl lovers usually forget, or form new attachments.

Florian was struck by a certain confusion in the letter of Dulcie, which seemed to have been written in haste and under the pressure of some excitement, so that at times it was almost incoherent.

‘I am not superstitious, as you know, dearest Florian, but I dislike the brilliant month of June more than any month in the year,’ she wrote. ‘Papa died in June, leaving me alone in the world and so poor—hence I

have always strange forebodings of unseen evils to come—evils that I may be powerless to avert ; thus June is ever associated in my mind with sorrow, death, and mystery. It is then I have restless nights and broken dreams of trouble haunting me—even of hideous forms seen dimly, and I leave my pillow in the morning more weary than when I laid my head upon it at night. It is June again, and I am in trouble now.'

She proceeded then to describe her persecution by Shafto, who was again returning after an absence ; that his presence, conjoined to the taunts, suspicions, and tone of Lady Fettercairn, made life at Craigengowan a burden to her, and that she had determined on flight from the house—from Scotland indeed—but where she was to go, or what she was to do, she knew not. She had resolved not even to consult her only friend Finella, so that, by the time her letter reached him, she would be out once again on the bosom of the cold world !

So ended this distressing and partly incoherent letter, which was the *last* Florian

received from Dulcie Carlyon, and by the tenor of it there seemed a futility in sending any reply to Craigengowan, as too probably she must have left it some weeks ago.

‘If killed to-day or to-morrow—anyway, before Cetewayo is caught—I’ll never know, probably, *how* my darling gets over her trouble,’ thought Florian simply but sadly.

There came by the same post no letter for the absent Hammersley, so Florian concluded that Finella Melfort must have seen through the medium of the public prints that he had sailed for Europe on sick leave.

It was vain for him to imagine where and amid what surroundings Dulcie was now, and doubtless with very limited means; it was a source of absolute agony to him at such a time, when he was so helpless, so totally unable to assist or advise her, and he seemed as in a dream to see the camp, with its streets of white tents and soldiers in thousands loitering about, or stretched on the grass, laughing, chatting, and smoking in the sunshine.

In the immediate foreground, on the branch

of a tree, hung the skinned carcase of an eland, from which a powerfully built Hottentot of the Natal Contingent, all nude save a pair of breeches, was cutting large slices with a huge knife, and dropping them into Madras cowrie baskets prior to cooking them in small coppers half full of mealies.

A rich plain stretched away to the north ; beyond it were mountains covered with grass and dotted by clumps of trees, and in some that grew close by the camp, numbers of beautiful squirrels were hopping from branch to branch in the sunshine.

Ulundi was now only sixteen miles distant from our outposts, and from thence came the last messengers of Cetewayo, bringing with them as a peace-offering the sword of the Prince Imperial—the sword worn by his father, too probably at Sedan, with a secret message—written by Cornelius Vign, the Dutch trader—to Lord Chelmsford, telling him that if he advanced on Ulundi to do it with strength, as the forces of Cetewayo were many, many thousands strong.

On the 1st July the division marched again.

Florian had been scouting with his squadron all the preceding day and far into the night, and lay in his tent weary and fagged on a ground sheet only, without taking off either accoutrements or regimentals. There, though worn, he had dreams, not of Dulcie, but of his dead comrade, jovial Bob Edgehill, and the little song the latter was wont to sing came to his dreaming ears :

‘ Merrily lads, so ho !
Some talk of a life at sea ;
But a life on the land,
With sword in hand,
Is the life, my lads, for me.’

Then he started up as he heard trumpet and drum announcing the ‘turn out’—the latter with the long and continued roll there is no mistaking. A hasty breakfast was taken—scalding coffee drunk standing beside the camp fires—the tents were struck, the waggon teams were inspanned, the Mounted Infantry went cantering to the front, and the march was begun.

Beautiful though the district looked when viewed from Entonjaneni, the country to be traversed proved a rugged one, covered with tall reed-like grass of giant height, that swayed slowly in the wind, interspersed with mimosa scrub and enormous cacti, with leaves like sabre-blades ; but by half-past one a.m. the White Umvolosi was reached.

More scouting in a dark and moonless night fell to the lot of Buller's Horse and Florian's Mounted Infantry. They could hear the war-song of the vast Zulu army—unseen in the darkness, but chiefly posted at fords on the river, loading the still, dewy air, rising and falling with wild, weird, and impressive effect, now apparently near, now distant ; but so mighty ever and anon was the volume of sound that it seemed to corroborate the alarming message of Cornelius Vign. Among other sounds were the awful shrieks of a dying prisoner, whom they had impaled on the bank of the stream.

Much scouting, scampering about, and skirmishing by 'bank, bush, and scaur' followed for three days, and the 4th of July

saw the division on its way to fight the great and final battle of the war, before Wolseley could come on the ground—Ulundi.

The sun was well up in the sky, when the column crossed the river at a point where sweet-scented bushes, graceful acacias, gigantic convolvuli, and wild guava fringed its banks, where the bees were humming, and the Kaffir vultures hovering over the slain of a recent skirmish; and splendid was its aspect in the brilliant morning light—the 17th Lancers with their striking uniform and ‘pennoned spears, a stately grove’—the infantry, not clad in hideous ‘mud-suits,’ but in their glorious scarlet, their polished bayonets and barrels shining in the sun, while in the hollows under the shadows of the great mountains, shadows into which the light of day had scarcely penetrated as yet, the impis or columns of the Zulus were gathering in their sombre and savage thousands.

‘The troops will form in hollow square!’ was now the General’s order, and, with other aides-de camp, Villiers, cigar in mouth, and

with flushed cheek and brightening eye, went cantering along the marching column, with the details of that formation for the advance—the first instance of such a movement in modern war, since William Wallace of Elderslie, the uncrowned King of Scotland, instituted such a system at the battle of Falkirk, and consequently he, as Green tells us in his ‘History of the English People,’ was actually the first founder of ‘that unconquerable British Infantry,’ before which the chivalry of Europe went down.

As formed by Lord Chelmsford on that eventful 4th of July, the infantry on the four sides of his oblong square marched in sections of fours, with all cavalry and other mounted men scouring the front and flanks, Shepstone’s Basutos covering the rear, with the cannon in the acute angles of three faces of the square ; all waggons and carts, with stores and ammunition, in the centre.

This was about eight in the morning, and with colours flying and bands playing merrily in the sunshine, this huge human rectangle marched in a north-easterly direction, past

two great empty kraals and a vast green tumulus that marks the grave of King Panda, the father of Cetewayo, who is seated therein, buried in a partly upright position, according to Zulu custom.

To the right of the marching square were hills covered with thorn trees overlooking the White Umvolosi; to its left were other hills covered with enormous loose stones, and in its rear was a rugged country tufted with mimosa trees, and others that stood up with feather-like foliage against the blue-green sky. And in the centre of a species of a natural amphitheatre stood three military kraals of vast extent, the principal being named Ulundi.

At the extremity of this amphitheatre there was visible a long line of oval-shaped shields, above which black heads and bright points appeared—the Zulu impis marching forward in double column with a cloud of skirmishers on their front and flanks, precisely according to European tactics.

The square was halted now, the ranks closed up, all facing outwards; the rifles and

cannon were loaded, the ammunition boxes opened, and two of the kraals were set in flames by the Irregular Horse; but one was extinguished, lest the dense smoke from it rolling across the plain might offer a cover for the Zulu advance.

To lure them on, Florian was sent with twenty Mounted Infantry, and, on seeing so petty a force riding towards them, the enemy wheeled back a portion of their front as a trap.

‘Come on, lads,’ cried Florian, brandishing his sword, ‘come on!—though not a man of us may return!’ he thought.

But the twenty men only poured in a rifle fire, wheeled about by fours, and, galloping back, won the shelter of the square, the four faces of which were fringed by steel and garlanded with jets of fire and smoke, while the roar of artillery shook the air, and high overhead was heard the fierce rush of the red rockets as they were shot into the royal kraal of Ulundi and fired it in many places.

With the rest of the mounted men, Florian

stood in the centre of the square, holding his horse by the bridle and looking quietly about him, and, like the rest, his heart beat high, every pulse was quickened, and the excitement became intense, as the long, long horns of the Zulu army in its thousands closed round the square, and as the circle contracted and came within closer range it was a splendid and thrilling but terrible sight to see the masses mowed down like swathes of grass beneath a mighty scythe.

The British troops were formed in ranks four deep, two kneeling as if to receive cavalry, the rifle-butt placed against the right knee, and two erect, firing steadily, all with bayonets fixed ; and in this dense formation, sad indeed would have been our casualties had the Zulu fire been well delivered.

Closing upon their skirmishers rather than permitting the latter to fall back upon their lines, their attack embraced the four faces of the vast hollow square, now shrouded with white whirling smoke, and edged by glittering fire and flashing steel. Out of the dark masses that were pouring on came bullets of

every calibre, from the sharp pinging cone of the Martini-Henry to the heavy whirring charge of the long elephant-gun, and many a man and many a horse was wounded and done to death thereby. The old Zulu tactics were pursued ; the attack was ever augmented by fresh bodies of infuriated savages, with the same dire results to them ; while all their devotion and desperation could rarely carry them past the verge of the cloud of smoke enveloping the square ; and thus, of the thousands who came on, only hundreds remained to waver or prolong the attack.

Whole crowds of naked and sombre forms seemed to lie as if suddenly struck dead, each man where he stood ; and it was so. Some, however, succeeded in flinging their bare breasts upon the bayonet points, and, with dying grasp on the rifle muzzles, went down almost at the feet of the front rank men, fierce, stern, fearless to the last, their white teeth set, their eyeballs gleaming like those of exasperated fiends, and their yells rending the air.

‘ Steady, men, steady,’ the officers were

heard to cry again and again ; ‘ fire low—low, and not so fast !’

Drury Lowe was unhorsed by a spent bullet, but vaulted into his saddle again. Eight companies of the Perthshire Light Infantry, flanked by seven and nine pounder guns in one face of the square, fought well and valiantly, though young soldiers, and in physique unlike those of whom Sir Francis Head wrote when at Paris in 1815, when he stated ‘ that a body of Scottish Highlanders, or Lowlanders, standing shoulder to shoulder, stretched over more ground than a similar number of inhabitants, soldier or civilian, of any other nation in Europe.’

The coolness of the men amid this close strife, while the dead and dying fell about them fast, was wonderful, the doctors attending the latter ; and in several instances the former, ere they were cold, were buried to save time, while the chaplain stood by to read the burial service amid a tempest of bullets.

‘ Have a cigar,’ said an officer of the Perthshire Light Infantry, seeing that Florian

was somewhat 'blown' after his scamper from the front to the shelter of the now environed square.

'Thanks,' said he, selecting one from the speaker's silver case; but ere the latter could give Florian a light, a ponderous knobkerie, flung with superhuman force at random—the last force, perhaps, of some dying savage—smashed his head to pulp in his tropical helmet as completely as a half-spent cannon ball would have done, and covered Florian with a sickening mess of blood and brains together.

In imitation of the British formation, a skilful Zulu Induna formed his men in a hollow square and hurled them like a mighty wave, with piercing war-cries and unearthly yells, upon that angle of the great square where six companies were posted under a Crimean veteran of the Scots Fusiliers, with two nine-pounder guns. The fight here became hand to hand, bayonet against assegai, and many a shield, by main strength of arm, was dashed against the breasts and faces of our men; but speedily the Zulu

square was broken, rolled up, and the survivors of it fled, stumbling as they ran over their own fallen and the blood-soaked ground on which the latter writhed and weltered.

Under the sweeping fire of the Gatlings they went down as forest leaves do before the last blasts of autumn, and in thirty minutes from the first opening of our infantry fire they were falling back in disorganized masses, which speedily, under the storm of shells, took the form of one vast mob in wild and helpless flight, while the cavalry were ordered in pursuit, and with a loud cheer the 17th unslung their lances, and by fours led the way through an opening made for them in the rear face of the square. The Dragoon Guards, Buller's Horse, and Florian's Mounted Infantry followed in quick succession.

'Front, form troop!' was the first cavalry order.

'Form squadron—form line—gallop—*charge!*' rang out the trumpets, as, sweeping round on their left pivots, the Horse took

the formations indicated, and then, with the united force of some dread and terrible engine, fell swooping down upon the foe, hewing through the shrinking walls of brave human flesh, after the lances were relegated to the sling and swords were drawn.

It was a terrible sight to see how, on right and left, these now red sword-blades were plied, every man rising in his stirrups to give deadlier impetus to his stroke, even when the shrapnel shells, fired with time-fuses, were exploding amid the foe. From the latter there came no cry for mercy nor for quarter ; they looked for none, as they would have given none ; and all who escaped the slaughter of the pursuit did so by winning the crests of some hills, where horses could not follow them, and from which they opened a lively fire of musketry.

Florian went on in this work like one in a wild, bad dream ; and it was only when the halt was sounded, followed by the order, ‘ Fours about—retire,’ that he became quite aware of all he had escaped, had undergone and done, and how mechanically he had

hewed about him—when he found the blade of his sword, even his fingers, stained with blood, and the sleeves of his tunic all ripped and burst under the shoulders by the exertions he had used.

Tom Tyrrell came out of the strife with his helmet gone, his head bandaged by a bloody handkerchief, and his horse's flanks bleeding from three assegais that stuck in them; but this was the case with several others.

It is remarkable that after the battle of Ulundi not *one* wounded Zulu was found on the field. Of all the hundreds upon hundreds who lay there helpless, every man of them had been despatched in cold blood by our native allies.

The power of the nation had departed from it now; and as for Cetewayo, he fled from Ulundi the day *before* the battle; and after the latter event his army began to melt away, as the warriors returned to their distant kraals, hopeless and sick of the war.

That named Ulundi was given to the flames by the Irregulars and Mounted

Infantry, and its ten thousand dome-roofed huts all blazing at once presented a striking spectacle; and after that event the Second Division and Flying Column began their rearward march to the camp at the Entonjaneni Mountain, to effect a junction with the First Division under General Crealock.

To Florian, as to many others, after the fever of battle had passed away, there came the usual revulsion of spirit that follows excitement so intense, and the keen thirst after that excitement and exertion so great, with the philosophical and not unnatural emotion of wonder as to ‘what it all had been about, and to what end this terrible slaughter and suffering!’

And he thought of the strange interments of some of the dead in that hollow square when under fire — young soldiers, instinct with boyish, hopeful, and glorious life, ardour and valour, struck down in death, and huddled into a ghastly hole, over which the bullets swept, ere their limbs were cold. ‘Death is a surprise—a woeful and terrible surprise—whenever it comes, even though we be by

the bedside watching for it, dreading it, as each breath leaves the lips we love.' But death seemed thus doubly grim on that day at Ulundi!

The troops found their tents ready pitched awaiting them at the camp beside the mountain, and a welcome shelter they proved, as the rearward march had been performed under drenching torrents of rain.

Stormy and windy was the night of the 6th of July, the second after the battle, and, for some days and nights subsequent the falling rain rendered all operations impossible, and added greatly to the sufferings of the wounded, causing also a serious mortality among the cavalry horses and commissariat oxen.

Mail after mail came into camp as usual bringing letters, some for the poor fellows who lay under the sod at Ulundi, but there were no more letters from Dulcie now for Florian, and none from Hammersley, whom he naturally supposed to be too ill to write by a passing ship outward bound.

The letter he had received shortly before the action at Ulundi was, as stated, the last he ever had from Dulcie, and her sudden and singular silence deepened his distress and anxiety.

What had happened? Was she ill, or well? How was she situated, and where? These thoughts occurred to him in endless iteration amid his military duties, which were not dull routine, but, so far as the pursuit of the fugitive King Cetawayo was concerned, were arduous, full of excitement and perils of various kinds.

His heart grew heavy, and his future, so far as it was connected with Dulcie Carlyon, seemed dark and uncertain, like the episodes of a dream. But it has been said that most life-histories leave hanging threads that may only be completed in the great web woven by eternity, and eternity had often been perilously close to Florian of late.

Dulcie was the only link he had in life—she seemed to him as friend, sister, and sweetheart, all in one.

CHAPTER VIII.

DISAPPEARANCE OF DULCIE.

SINCE the reader last saw Dulcie Carlyon she had become chilled and changed in manner, under the influence of Lady Fettercairn's bearing and remarks, to all save Finella. All her natural jollity and *espièglerie* of way were gone, and every hour that it was possible to do so she spent in the seclusion of her own room, one high up in a square turret of the old house, with windows that opened to a far vista of the Howe of the Mearns, terminated by a glimpse of the German Sea.

Here she was sometimes joined by Finella, who could no longer persuade her to ramble as of old in the grounds, and never again to

accompany her in the saddle when she took Fern for a spin along the country roads.

‘Are you not sick of crewel work, and embroidering sage birds of shapes that never existed upon brown bath-towels?’ asked Finella. ‘I know you do it by grand-mamma’s wish ; but what tasteless folly it is.’

‘I would rather, as I did at home, knit stockings for the poor,’ said Dulcie.

‘Better buy than knit them,’ responded the heiress, ‘and so save one’s self a world of trouble.’

It became too evident to Dulcie that the time of her dismissal from Craigengowan was drawing nigh ; that it was only delayed by the absence of Shafto in Edinburgh, and she resolved, ere he returned, to get the balance of her little salary and quit the place, as it had now become odious to her.

Dulcie had old Welsh blood in her veins, and more than once had she heard her father, Lewellen Carlyon, whose one ewe-lamb she was, descant on how he could count kith and kin into the remotest past, when his forefathers wandered through the forest of Caer-

lyon—whence his name—had manned Offa's Dyke, and shared the perils of Owain Glendwr. To speak of such things now, even to Finella, seemed to the girl vain folly, but they were keenly in her heart nevertheless.

And so there came an evening, the last she was to spend under the steep slate roof of Craigengowan.

Lady Fettercairn was going for a drive among the summer roads that were all like leafy tunnels or long avenues of foliage, to visit that famous senator, Lord Maccowkay, who was then at his country house of Middyn Grange, and Finella, perceiving how pale Dulcie was looking, said :

‘ May Miss Carlyon come with us, grand-mamma ?’

‘ Certainly not,’ replied Lady Fettercairn, with hauteur and asperity, though Dulcie was within hearing, carrying Snap in his satin-lined basket. ‘ When is this sort of thing to end, Finella ?’

There came a time when the Lady of that Ilk recalled this remark, and many others

similar, for just then she did not see certainly where the future was to end.

So the two ladies drove away, and Dulcie, for companionship, though then unaware that it would be for the last time, took tea with the kindly old housekeeper, whom she found busy in her pantry and closets preparing for that social meal ; and Dulcie helped her to cut and butter the bread, polish the cups and saucers and old silver spoons, to arrange the brown tea-cakes, crisp biscuits, and luscious Scottish preserves of home manufacture, and all the while a sadness oppressed her, for which she could not account.

This, however, seemed explained when, at dinner that evening, Lady Fettercairn said, while returning a letter to her pocket :

‘Shafto returns late to-night—or early to-morrow morning.’

‘From where?’ asked Finella, though, sooth to say, she cared little where from.

‘Edinburgh.’

‘And not an hour too soon, I am afraid,’ said Lord Fettercairn, with his sandy-grey eyebrows deeply knitted.

No one asked 'why,' so a silence ensued, and a little later in the evening Finella said to Dulcie :

'Why are you so silent to-night?'

'Am I so?'

'Yes—even sad—*triste*.'

'Sad—you don't mean cross?'

'No, Dulcie dear, you never are cross.'

'I am full of very weary thoughts, and wish to retire, if Lady Fettercairn can spare me,' she added, raising her voice.

'Of course—go,' replied the latter; and Dulcie, painfully conscious that her employer had been more than usually cold, hard, and even bitter to her—all, no doubt, *à propos* of Shafto's return—bowed and murmured 'good-night,' with a soft and lingering glance at Finella.

Shafto returning! Dulcie was always nervous about his future conduct and her own position, and she could not prepare herself again for dissembling in public and hating in private—for the inevitable meetings at table and elsewhere. Over and above all was the dread that by his intense cunning he might

work her mischief—a mischief that to her might prove social ruin.

Dulcie had writhed and winced under all Lady Fettercairn's not always delicately veiled hints as to the social gulf that separated people *and* people—to wit, Miss Melfort, of Craigengowan, and the paid companion, and of young folks of bad taste and little discretion, who were inclined to step out of their proper sphere ; she knew the drift of all this ; her heart swelled within her, and now she withdrew with a stern and perhaps rash resolve that took active form on the morrow.

In the corridor before they separated for the night, Finella thought that Dulcie kissed and clasped her with more than usual tenderness and effusion, and became aware that there were tears on the girl's cheek ; but this had been too often the case of late to excite remark.

However, she remembered this emotion with some pain at a future time.

In the morning the then small circle of Craigengowan assembled in the charming

breakfast-room. Shafto had not come over-night; Lord Fettercairn had not opened his letters, but—though nothing of a politician—was idling over a paper which the butler had cut and aired for him.

Lady Fettercairn glanced at a handsome antique French clock upon the grey marble mantelpiece, and said, with as much irritation as she ever permitted herself to show with reference to Dulcie :

‘Not down yet—when she knows that she has to preside at the tea-urn and so forth! Is she giving herself the airs of a lady of—what is the matter?’ she exclaimed, as a servant whom she had despatched on an errand of inquiry returned looking somewhat discomposed. ‘I hope she is not ill, especially with anything infectious?’

‘No, my lady—not ill.’

‘Not ill—that is fortunate.’

‘No.’

‘Where then is she—why not here?’

‘She isn’t there, my lady.’

‘There—where?’

‘In her room—nor anywhere in the house.’

Finella remembered the peculiar bearing of Dulcie the previous night, and her tremulous sisterly kiss, with a species of pang, and hurried upstairs to the square turret-room.

‘Of course *she* is interested!’ said Lady Fettercairn scoffingly.

‘There is always an exuberant vitality—a great flow of animal spirits about Finella,’ replied her husband.

‘All of which I deem hoydenish and bad form.’

Finella returned, looking pale and scared, to report that Miss Carlyon’s bed did not appear to have been slept in last night, that her wardrobe was all tumbled about, leaving evident traces of selections and packing, and that to all appearance she was gone from the house.

‘Gone—then I hope it is not with Shafto!’ exclaimed Lady Fettercairn, paling at her own idea.

‘Scarcely: is he not coming here, as his letter yesterday announces?’ said Lord Fettercairn.

‘Gone—and in that rude and uncere-

monious, and certainly most mysterious manner, which through local gossip will find its way in some odious mode into every local paper!' said Lady Fettercairn, while she grimly directed Finella to officiate at the tea-board.

'She is away, poor thing, without a doubt,' said the butler, who was carving at the side-board; 'and must have left the house by the conservatory door—I found it open this morning.'

'I hope that she has not——' but even Lady Fettercairn, while surmising mentally whether her jewel case was all intact, had not the hardihood to put the cruel suspicion in words.

'It is most annoying,' said the Peer, with his noble mouth full.

'Very—she was so useful too—very—with all her faults,' added Lady Fettercairn, tenderly caressing Snap, who was relegated to a housemaid for his morning bath.

She did not expect an escapade of this sort; the great luxury of the certain dismissal had been denied her; she sank back in her

chair for a minute or so, and sniffed languidly at her gold-topped scent-bottle, as if nerving herself to hear something horrible, while the grounds were searched for traces of the fugitive; and she had ideas of having the Swan's Pool and the adjacent stream dragged.

Finella thought she would like to run away too; but with all her wealth it was less easy for an heiress of position to do so than for the poor and nameless companion; and now that Dulcie was gone, Finella felt that the link between herself and Hammersley was cut off.

Apart from that important item in her life, she was deeply sorry, as she had conceived for Dulcie one of those sudden and so-called undying friendships for which, we are told, 'the female heart is specially remarkable.'

Finella felt that the cold and inquiring eyes of Lady Fettercairn were upon her, and knew that, if she would not excite remark and draw reprehension upon herself, breakfast must be partaken of, even though her heart was breaking. So she bathed her eyes, re-smoothed her hair, and took her place at the

table with as much composure as she could assume.

‘If her flight is not traced—though why we should care to trace it I don’t know,’ said Lady Fettercairn bitterly, ‘and if her body is not found, we may conclude that she has eloped with some low lover. I hope all the grooms, gardeners, gamekeepers, and so forth, are to be seen in their places,’ she added; ‘and with all her faults, in appearance and style she was a great improvement upon Mrs. Prim, with her iron-grey hair arranged in corkscrew curls on each side of her face.’

Finella thought so too. Lord Fettercairn thought his better half had been latterly too severe upon the poor little companion, but did not venture to say so.

CHAPTER IX.

FLIGHT.

‘Go I must,’ murmured Dulcie, when in the solitude of her own room she said her nightly prayers on her knees. ‘I cannot help it. I may come to want bread by the step I am about to take, but better death than enduring this system of mortification and degradation.’

She had received her slender quarterly allowance some time before that crisis, and as yet luckily none of it had been spent. How small a sum it looked to face the world with !

She packed and prepared all her clothes, intending to write to the housekeeper for them when she found another home. In an ample Gladstone bag she placed carefully all

that was requisite for her immediate need, and, weary with rapid exertion and heavy thought, laid her head on the pillow of a sofa, fearing to undress or trust herself in bed, lest a deep sleep might fall upon her.

All was silent in the great house, and no sound broke the stillness of the warm summer night save when some dog bayed at the moon from the quadrangle of the stable-yard.

Midnight struck on a great and sonorous clock in an adjacent corridor; anon a little French clock on her chimney-piece chimed out two on its silver bell, but no sleep came to Dulcie's eyes, nor did she desire to court it.

Her mind was full of rambling fancies. She thought of her parents lying so peacefully side by side in old Revelstoke churchyard, within sound of the sobbing sea, and of what their emotions would have been could they have foreseen all that was before her of doubt and unhappiness; and with the memory of them she tenderly turned over some withered leaves that lay in a little prayer-

book Mr. Pentreath had given her, and while doing so recalled the sweet lines that seemed so *apropos* to them :

‘Only a bunch of withered leaves,
Brought by a stranger’s hand,
But they grew on a spot she dearly loved—
They bloomed in the dear old land.
Father and mother lie there at rest
Beneath the soft emerald sod,
Under the shelter of the cross,
And close to the house of God,’

close to the time-worn church of Revelstoke. She thought of Shafto and the thorn he had proved in her path, and felt a satisfaction from the conviction that after this night too probably she would never more look upon his face.

She thought again and again of Florian. Where was he then, and what doing? Too probably sleeping the sleep of the weary and worn, on the bare earth in some tented field, awaiting the coming perils of the morrow, and then with the idea of Finella came fresh tears for parting thus from the only friend she had.

After three had struck she dressed herself

quickly in the costume in which she meant to travel, assured herself that her purse was safe, that her hat, gloves, and sunshade were at hand, and sat down by a window to watch for the earliest streak of dawn.

With all this earnestness of preparation and of purpose she had no settled plan for the future—no very defined one at least ; her sole desire was to anticipate the final mortification of dismissal, and to get away from the vicinity of Lady Fettercairn, of Shafto, and of Craigengowan.

Save the Rev. Paul Pentreath, far away in her native Devonshire, and the vicar in London through whom he had befriended her, she had no one to whom to look forward, and, save for Florian's sake, she felt at times as if she cared little what became of her. She would reach London, take a little lodging there, and look about her for some employment while her money lasted ; and when it was gone—gone, what then ?

Again came the thought of Finella, whom she loved with all the passionate earnestness of an impulsive young heart thrust back

upon itself, and yearning for friendship and affection. Even with her regard it was impossible that she could stay longer in the same house with him who was now returning—Shafto—even were dismissal not hanging over her. She could but go away; her presence was necessary to no one's happiness, and none would miss her—perhaps not even Finella after a time, for the latter lived in a world—the world of wealth and rank—a sphere apart from that of poor Dulcie Carlyon.

Amid these thoughts she started: dawn was breaking in the east, but the world around her was still involved in gloom and sleep.

How long, long and chill, the night had seemed; yet it was a short and warm one of July, when there is only a total darkness of four hours, especially in a region so far north as the Howe of the Mearns.

Red light stole along the waters of the distant German Sea; it began to tip the hill-tops and crept gradually down into the woods and glens below, where the Bervie, the

Finella, and the Cowie brawled on their way to the ocean.

As one in a dream, she sat for a little time watching the dawn till the light of the half-risen sun was streaming over the tree-tops and through the parted curtains of her windows, when she started up with all the resolution she had taken overnight yet full in her mind.

With rapid and trembling fingers she assumed the last details of her travelling costume, smoothed her golden hair, gave a final glance at herself in the mirror, and saw how pale and unslept she looked after her past night's vigil, tied her veil tightly across her face, fitted on her gloves with accuracy, took her travelling bag, and with a prayer on her lips prepared to go out into the world—alone!

The clustering roses and clematis were about the windows of the square turret-room, notwithstanding its great height from the ground; the birds were twittering among them, and diamond dewdrops gemmed every leaf.

Light and shadowy clouds of mist, exhaled upwards by the early morning sun, hung about the summit of Moelmannoch and other hills, and in the sunshine the insect world was all astir : the bees were already abroad, and the blackbirds were hopping about the gravelled terraces. To Dulcie it seemed that they at least were at home.

She leaned for a moment out of the window and drank—for the last time—a deep draught of the pure air that came from the lovely Scottish landscape over which her eyes wandered, as it stretched away down the fertile and peaceful Howe of the Mearns, the corn deepening into gold, the picturesque houses, luxuriant orchards and gardens ; and she bade to each and all farewell, with little regret, perhaps, for with all their beauty they were too intimately associated with the idea of Lady Fettercairn and many a humiliation.

Opening her room-door she stole swiftly down the great carpeted staircase, passed through the drawing-rooms into the conservatory, the door of which she knew she could unlock more easily than that of the great door

which opened to the *porte cochère*. There was no one yet astir in all that numerous household, so, hurrying across the dewy lawn, she turned her face resolutely towards the station, where she knew she would reach the early Aberdeen train for the South.

The country highway was deserted ; she met no one but a gamekeeper returning from a night's watch, perhaps, with his gun under his arm. She thought he looked at her curiously as she passed him, sorely weighted by her travelling bag, but he did not address her ; and so without other adventures she reached the little wayside station of Craigen-gowan just as the gates were being unclosed, and, quickly securing her ticket, retired to the seclusion of the waiting-room.

Her heart had but one aching thought—the parting with Finella.

In her pride and indignation we must admit that Dulcie, ever a creature of impulse, was not acting judiciously. She had not stopped to ask a letter of recommendation — ‘a character,’ she mentally and bitterly phrased it—from Lady Fettercairn ; neither had she

risked the opposition and kind advice of Finella, but had thus left her present life of irritation and humiliation to rush into a new and unknown world, that now, even when she had barely crossed the rubicon, was beginning, as she sat in the lonely and empty wayside station, to chill and dismay her.

‘In the future that is before me, whom am I to trust in again? How *am* I to fight the world’s battle alone?’ she was beginning to think, even while the clanking train for the South came sweeping across the echoing Howe.

Ay, she so pure, so artless, so unsuspecting of evil in others!

At last she was in the train and off. She gave one long farewell glance at the lofty turrets of haunted Craigengowan, because Finella was there, and felt that never again would they ramble together by Queen Mary’s Thorn, the Swan’s Pool, the old gate through which the fated Lord rode forth to battle, or by the old ruined Castle of Fettercairn with all its legends.

Dulcie experienced a kind of relief in the

swiftness of the speed with which the express train flew past station after station, outstripping the wind apparently; villages and thatched farms were seen and gone; trees, bridges, ruined towers, those features so common in the Scottish landscape, fields and hedgerows, swept rearward, telegraph wires seemed to sink and rise and twist themselves in one, the poles apparently pursuing each other in the fury of the pace.

Now it was Arbroath, where the train paused for a little time—Arbroath with its mills, tall chimneys, and substantial houses, amid which tower the remains of that noble abbey which held the bones of William the Lion, with its huge round window, for seven hundred years a landmark from the sea; anon came Broughty Craig with its ancient tower, under the walls of which have been shed the blood of English, French, and Germans, with Dundee, ‘the gift of God,’ amid the haze of its manufactories, to the westward.

Here a kindly old railway guard—who whilom as a 1st Royal Scot had shed his

blood at Alma and Inkermann—taking pity on the pale and weary girl, brought her a cup of warm tea from the buffet, and, as he said, ‘a weel-buttered bap, ye ken,’ and most acceptable they were.

A little time and her train was sweeping through Fife, and she saw the woods of Falkland—those lovely woods wherein ‘the bonnie Earl of Gowrie’ flirted with Anne of Denmark. . Soon Cupar was left behind, and the Eden; flowing through its green and fertile valley; and then, worn with the vigil of the past night and her own heavy thoughts, Dulcie fell asleep, without the coveted satisfaction of a dream of Florian or Finella.

CHAPTER X.

A STARTLING LETTER.

THE step taken by Dulcie was a source of great mortification to Lady Fettercairn.

She regretted that she had not anticipated such an unforeseen event by dismissal. Visitors, she knew, would miss the bright-faced, golden-haired English girl who—when permitted—played with such good execution, and sang so well and sweetly; and Lady Fettercairn could not, with a clear conscience, say that she had given her her *congé*, or why.

‘Miss Carlyon has put me in a most awkward position,’ she said querulously; ‘her conduct has been most unprincipled, in leaving me thus abruptly, before I could look about me for a substitute; and I think

Mr. Kippilaw might be instructed to prosecute her criminally. Don't you think so, Fettercairn ?'

But the Peer only smiled faintly and applied himself to another egg.

Ere breakfast was over another event occurred. Shafto appeared suddenly at table. He had heard of Dulcie Carlyon's absence or flight, and was in no way surprised by the occurrence.

'You are just in time, Shafto dear,' said Lady Fettercairn, with one of her made-up smiles ; 'tea or coffee ?'

'Tea,' said he curtly, as Finella took the silver teapot, Shafto all the while looking as if he would rather have had a stiff and well-iced glass of brandy and soda, for he had a crushed and weary aspect.

'We thought you would be here last night,' said Lady Fettercairn.

'Why ?' asked Shafto, who seemed inclined to deal in monosyllables.

'Your letter led us to expect you.'

'Did it ?'

'Yes.'

‘Well—I missed the last train.’

‘You always do,’ said Lord Fettercairn somewhat pointedly.

‘Ah,’ thought Shafto, ‘the old fellow’s liver is out of order, and gout threatening, of course—a bad look-out for me.’

On that morning he did not like the expression of Lord Fettercairn’s face, so he resolved to defer speaking of his ‘affairs’ till a future time; but in a little space, as we shall show, the chance was gone for throwing himself, as he had thought to do, ‘on the mercy’ of either Lord or Lady Fettercairn.

The evening before he had been among a set of very different people—flashily dressed roughs returning from a local racecourse, their dirty hands over-bejewelled, with foul pipes and fouler language in their mouths, speeding hither and thither by train in search of pigeons to pluck, with their jargon of backing the favourite, making up books, and playing shilling Nap and Poker by the dim light of the carriage lamp, while imbibing strong waters from flasks of all sorts and sizes.

What a contrast they presented to his present refined surroundings, with Finella standing out among them, so pure, so patrician, and so exquisitely lady-like; and in attendance upon him, with hands that were white as alabaster—Finella, fresh and fragrant as a white moss rose, attired in a most ‘fetching’ morning costume to the feminine eye, suggestive of Regent Street.

Lord Fettercairn now addressed himself to the task of opening his letters, after the contents of the household postbag had been distributed round the table by that rubicund priest of Silenus, old Mr. Grapeston, the butler.

There were several blue envelopes for Shafto, which—with an unuttered malediction on his lips—he thrust unopened into the pocket of his tweed morning coat.

Among his letters Lord Fettercairn received one which seemed to startle him so much that, ignoring all the rest, he read it again and again, his sandy grey eyebrows becoming more and more knitted, and the colour going and coming in his now withered

cheek, as Shafto, who was watching him very closely, could plainly see. He seemed certainly very perturbed, and tossed aside all his other letters, as if their contents could be of no consequence compared with those of this particular missive.

‘Your letter seems to disturb you, grandfather,’ said Shafto.

‘It does—it does, indeed.’

‘Sorry to hear it: may I inquire what it is about—or from whom it comes?’

‘It is a letter from Mr. Kippilaw, senior,’ replied Lord Fettercairn, darting from under his shaggy eyebrows, and over the rim of his *pince-nez*, a glance at Shafto, so keen and inquiring that the latter felt his heart stand still; yet summoning his constitutional insolence to his aid, he asked:

‘And what is the old pump up to now?’

‘Shafto!’ exclaimed Lady Fettercairn, who detested slang.

‘He refers to something that may prove very unpleasant,’ said the Peer, carefully smoothing out the letter.

‘To—to me?’

‘Yes—and to me, I regret to say, most certainly. He says there are many matters on which he wishes to confer with me personally; among others, “A visit from an old Highland woman, named Madelon Galbraith, a native of Ross-shire, who was nurse to Mr. Lennard’s wife in her infancy, and also to their son. Her revelations, conjoined with other things, now startle me, as they are most strange, and must be probed to the bottom.” He also says that this woman—Madelon Galbraith—visited Craigengowan in my absence. Did such a visit take place?’

‘Yes,’ said Lady Fettercairn.

‘And she was expelled very roughly.’

‘Well—I believe so—rather.’

‘Why?’

‘Because she was mad or intoxicated—most insolent, at all events,’ replied Shafto, with a choking sensation in his throat.

‘To you?’

‘Yes—to me.’

‘Well,’ resumed Lord Fettercairn, who evidently seemed very much perturbed, ‘she

has been with Mr. Kippilaw, as I tell you, and has made some strange revelations requiring immediate and close investigation.'

'May I know what they are?' asked Shafto with a sinking heart, that only rose when spite and hate and fury gathered in it.

'No—you may not, yet,' replied Lord Fettercairn, as he folded up the letter and abruptly left the table; and that same forenoon his lordship took an early train for Edinburgh.

Shafto heard of this with growing alarm, which all the brandy and soda of which he partook freely in the smoking-room, and more than one huge cabana, could not soothe. Though fearing the worst, through Madelon Galbraith, he thought that perhaps in the meantime Kippilaw's business referred to his gambling debts, his bills and promissory notes, and too probably to his 'row with that cad, Garallan,' as he mentally termed the affair of the loaded die.

He rambled long alone in the same stately avenue down which Lennard Melfort had

passed so many years before, when, with a gallant heart full of anger, wounded pride, and undeserved sorrow, he turned his back for ever on lordly Craigengowan.

There he loitered, full of anxious and most unenviable thoughts, sulkily dragging down his fair moustache ; and it has been remarked by physiognomists that good-natured men always twirl their moustaches upwards, whereas a morose or suspicious man does just the reverse.

From the avenue he wandered across the lawn and under the trees, like a restless or unquiet spirit, his unpleasant face wearing an uneasy expression, and his eyes, which were seldom raised from the ground, shifted always from side to side.

‘I may have to make a clean bolt for it,’ he muttered as Finella came suddenly upon him, and, though detesting him, she was too gentle not to feel some pity for his crushed appearance.

‘Shafto, why are you so disturbed?’ she asked. ‘Of what are you afraid?’

‘Of what?’ he queried almost savagely.

‘Yes.’

‘I don’t know.’

‘Who then can know?’

‘I tell you I don’t know what to fear, but things are looking infernally dark for me. I am going down the hill at a devil of a pace, and with no skid on.’

‘I do not understand your phraseology,’ said Finella coldly.

‘Understand, then, that many of my troubles lie at your door,’ said Shafto, turning abruptly from her, as he thus referred to her aversion to himself and certainly not unnatural preference for Vivian Hammersley, and that much of the money he had raised had been advanced on the chances of his lucrative marriage with her.

‘What is about to happen? When will old Fettercairn return, and in what mood? What the devil is up—perhaps by this time?’ thought Shafto, as he resumed his solitary promenade. ‘I would rather face a hundred perils in the light of day, than have one, with a nameless dread, overhanging me in the dark.’

And as he muttered and thought of Madelon Galbraith, his shifty eyes gleamed with that savage expression which comes with a thirst for blood.

Meanwhile Lord Fettercairn, a man of strict honour in his own way, though utterly destitute of proper patriotism or love of country, was being swept on to Edinburgh by an express train; he was full of bitter thoughts, vexation, pain, even grief and shame, for all that Shafto was evidently bringing upon his house and home.

He had secured, he thought, an heir to his ill-gotten title and estates, and with that knowledge would ever have to drain the bitter cup of disappointment to the dregs.

Finella never doubted that, owing to their great mutual regard, Dulcie would write to her, and tell of her own welfare, safety, and prospects; but weary, long, and solitary days passed on and became weeks, and Dulcie never did so. She had perhaps nothing pleasant to relate of herself, and thus the tenor or spirit of her letters to a friend so rich might be liable to misconstruction. If

written, perhaps they were intercepted. So, regarding Shafto and Lady Fettercairn as the mutual cause of the poor girl's flight, and perhaps destruction, Finella now resolved to leave Craigengowan, and go on a visit to her maternal grandmother, Lady Drumshoddy, then in London, when that matron, having now her favourite nephew with her, began to mature some schemes of her own ; but carefully, as she had read that 'the number of marriages that come to nothing annually because one or other or both of the innocent victims suddenly discover they are being thrown together with *intention*, is inconceivable.'

CHAPTER XI.

THE PURSUIT OF CETEWAYO.

MAIL after mail came to head-quarters, brought by post-carts and orderlies, from the rear, but they brought no letters from Dulcie Carlyon. So, whether she had, as she threatened she would do, fled from Craigen-gowan, or remained there, found friends elsewhere with happiness or grief, Florian could not know, and the doubt was a source of torment to him.

Horseback has been considered a famous place for reflection, but one could scarcely find it so when serving as a Mounted Infantry-man, scouting on the outlook for lurking Zulus, with every energy of ear and eye watching donga, boulder, bush, and tuft of reedy grass.

Sir Garnet Wolseley's orders to the army reached the camp of Lord Chelmsford at Entonjaneni on the 8th July, and the latter prepared at once to resign his command and return home.

Two days afterwards, that retrograde movement which so puzzled and elated the Zulus began, and after four days' marching the Second Division and the Flying Column reached Fort Marshall, on the Upoko River, whence a long train of sick and wounded were sent to the village of Ladysmith, in Kannaland, escorted by two companies of the Scots Fusiliers and Major Bengough's Natives, attired in all their fighting bravery — cowtails, copper anklets and armlets, necklaces of monkeys' teeth, and plumes of feathers.

‘Great changes are on the *tapis*,’ said Villiers, as he lay on the grass in Florian's tent, smoking, and sharing with him some hard biscuits with ‘square-face’ and water. ‘The 17th Lancers start for India; Newdigate's column is to be broken up, and chiefly to garrison that chain of forts which

Chelmsford has so skilfully constructed along the whole Zulu frontier from the Blood River to the Indian Ocean ; but Cetewayo is yet to be captured. Sir Evelyn Wood and the heroic Buller are going home, and so is your humble servant.'

'You—why?' asked Florian.

'Sir Garnet has brought out his entire staff, and I have not the good luck to be one of the Wolseley *ring*,' replied Villiers, with a haughty smile, as he twirled up his moustache and applied himself for consolation to the 'square-face.'

When, on an evening in July, Sir Garnet, with his new staff, amid a storm of wind and rain, rode into the camp of the First Division under General Crealock, the appearance of his party, with their smoothly shaven chins, brilliant new uniforms, and spotless white helmets, formed a strong contrast to the war and weather worn soldiers of Crealock, in their patched and stained attire, with their unkempt beards ; for the use of the razor had long been eschewed in South Africa, where, however, the officers and men of each column

trimmed their hirsute appendages after the fashion adopted by their leaders; thus, as General Newdigate affected the style of Henry VIII., so did his troops; Sir Evelyn Wood trimmed his beard in a peak, pointed like Philip II. of Spain, and so, we are told, did all the Flying Column.

Sir Garnet Wolseley now arranged his future plans for the final conquest of Zululand, and stationed troops to hold certain lines and rivers, while the rest were formed in two great columns, under Colonels Clarke of the 57th and Baker Russell of the 13th Hussars, two officers of experience, the former having served in Central India and the Maori War, and the latter in the war of the Mutiny, when he covered himself with honours at Kurnaul and elsewhere.

With Clarke's column were five companies of Mounted Infantry, led by Major Barrow, and one of them was led by Florian, who had now earned a high reputation as an active scouting officer.

Clarke's orders were to march northwards and occupy Ulundi, or all that was left of it.

Without the capture of the now luckless Cetewayo, the permanent settlement of the country was deemed impossible ; thus a kind of circle was formed round the district in which he was known to be lurking, to preclude his escape.

The traitor Uhamu, with his followers, occupied a district near the Black Umvolosi ; the savage Swazis in thousands under Captain M'Leod held the bank of the Pongola River, armed with heavy lances and knobkerries ; Russell advanced on a third quarter, and Clarke on a fourth ; thus the sure capture of the fugitive King was deemed only a matter of time.

At a steep rocky hill overhanging the Idongo River the column of the latter, which included three battalions of infantry, was reinforced by five companies of the 80th (or Staffordshire Volunteers), the Natal Pioneers, and two Gatling guns, to which were added two nine-pounders on reaching once more the Entonjaneni Mountain.

It was now reported that Cetewayo had found shelter in a little kraal in the recesses

of the Ngome forest, a dense primeval wilderness of giant wood and deep jungle. But the meshes of the net were closing fast around him.

Leaving the main body of his column at a redoubt named Fort George, at the head of only three hundred and forty mounted infantry Colonel Russell, at daybreak on the 13th of August, rode westward beyond the Black Umvolosi, into a district occupied by many Zulus, in the hope of picking up the royal fugitive.

The scouting advanced guard he entrusted to Florian, whose men rode forward in loose and open formation, with loaded rifles unslung.

The country through which they proceeded was very wild, steep, woody, and rugged, and on seeing how slender his force appeared to be, the Zulus began to gather in numbers, preparatory to disputing his further advance.

‘My intention,’ said Baker Russell, ‘is to reach Umkondo, where Cetewayo is said to be lurking; you will therefore show a bold front and clear the way at all hazards.’

This left Florian no alternative but to fight his opponents, whatever their strength perhaps, and the region into which they were now penetrating had the new and most unusual danger of being infested by lions, as the 1st King's Dragoon Guards found to their cost.

Manning a narrow gorge fringed with thornwood trees and date palms, with brandished rifle and assegai and their grey shields uplifted in defiance, a strong party of the enemy appeared, led by a tall and powerful-looking chief, whose large armlets and anklets of burnished copper shone in the evening sunshine, and it was but too evident that, under his auspices, mischief was at hand.

That they remarked Florian was an officer was soon apparent, when two shots were fired from each flank of the gorge ; but these whistled harmlessly past, and starred with white a boulder in his rear.

‘ Pick off that fellow who is making himself so prominent,’ said Florian, with some irritation, as his two escapes were narrow ones.

One of the 24th fired and missed the leader.

‘What distance did you sight your rifle at?’ asked Florian.

‘Four hundred yards, sir,’ replied the soldier.

‘Absurd! He is certainly six hundred yards off. Do you try, Tyrrell.’

Then Tom, who was a deadly shot, reined up, held his rifle straight between his horse’s ears, sighted at six hundred yards, and pressing the butt firmly against his right shoulder and restraining his breath, took aim steadily at the chief, who stood prominently on a fragment of rock, his figure defined clearly against the blue sky like that of a dark bronze statue.

He fired; the bullet pierced the Zulu’s forehead, as was afterwards discovered; he fell backward and vanished from sight.

‘By Jove, he’s knocked over, sir,’ said Tom, with a quiet laugh, as he dropped another cartridge into his breech-block, and closed it with a snap.

‘Bravo, Tom—a good shot!’ said the men

of the 24th, while, with a yell of rage that reverberated in the gorge, the Zulus fled, and Florian's scouting party rode on at a canter, and ultimately reached a deserted German mission station at a place called Rhinstorf.

As they rode through the gorge, with the indifference that is born of war and its details, Tom Tyrrell looked with perfect composure on the man he had shot, and remarked to Florian, with a smile :

‘These Zulus are certainly one of the connecting links that old Darwin writes about, but links with the devil himself, I think.’

At the station of Rhinstorf Colonel Russell now ascertained that fully thirty-five miles of wild and rugged country would have to be traversed ere he could reach Umkondo, where Cetewayo was reported to be in concealment. To add to the difficulties of proceeding further, night had fallen, the native guide, having lost heart, had deserted, and many of the horses had fallen lame by the roughness of the route from Fort George ; thus Baker Russell came to the conclusion

that to proceed further then would be rash, if not impossible.

Cetewayo still resisted all the terms offered him, acting under the influence of Dabulamanzi, who urged him to distrust the British, in the hope that if the fugitive died of despair in the forest of Ngome, he himself might succeed to the throne of the Zulus.

While on this patrol duty our Mounted Infantry came upon the remains of some of our fellows who had fallen after the attack on the Inhlobane Mountain in March and lain unburied for nearly six months, exposed to the weather and the Kaffir vultures.

CHAPTER XII.

AT THE 'RAG.'

WE now turn to a very different scene and locality—to Regent Street, still deemed the architectural *chef d'œuvre* of the celebrated Mr. Nash, though it is all mere brick and plaster.

The London season was past and over, but one would hardly have thought so, as the broad pavements seemed still so crowded, and so many vehicles of every kind were passing in close lines along the thoroughfare from Waterloo Place to the Langham Hotel.

It was a bright sunny forenoon, and as Vivian Hammersley, now a convalescent, and in accurate morning mufti, looked on the well-dressed throng, the shops filled with everything the mind could desire or the

world produce, and at the entire aspect of the well-swept street, he thought, after his recent experience of forest and donga, of rocky mountain and pathless karoo, that there was nothing like it in Europe for an idler—that it surpassed alike the Broadway of Uncle Sam and the Grand Boulevard of Paris.

Enjoying the situation and his surroundings to the fullest extent, he was walking slowly down towards where the colonnades stood of old, when suddenly he experienced something between an electric shock and a cold douche.

Both well mounted, a handsome fellow attired in excellent taste, with a tea rose and a green sprig in his lapel, and a graceful girl in a well-fitting dark blue habit, a dainty hat and short veil, ambled slowly past him—so slowly that he could observe them well—and in the latter he recognised Finella!

Finella Melfort, mounted on her favourite pad Fern; but *who* was this with whom she seemed on such easy and laughing terms, and with whom she was riding through the

streets of London, without even the escort of a groom ?

Erelong quickening their pace to a trot, they turned westward along Conduit Street, as if intending to 'do a bit of Park,' and he lost sight of them.

Her companion was one whom Hammersley had never seen before, but he could remark that he had all the manner and appearance of a man of good birth ; but there was even something more than that in his bearing—an undefinable and indescribable air of interest seemed to hover about them, and Hammersley thought he might prove a very formidable rival. But surely matters had not come to *that* !

To letters that he had addressed to Finella at Craigengowan, under cover to 'Miss Carlyon,' no answer had ever been returned. He knew not that Dulcie was no longer there, and that the letters referred to had gone back to the Post Office. And so Finella's silence—was it indifference?—seemed unpleasantly accounted for now.

He knew not her address in London.

The house of the Fettercairn family was shut up, and he could not accost her while escorted by 'that fellow,' as she seemed ever to be, for on two occasions he saw them again in the Row; nor could he prosecute any inquiries, as most of the mutual friends at whose dances and garden parties he had been wont to meet her in the past times were now out of town.

It was tantalizing—exasperating!

Did she suppose he had been killed, and had already forgotten him? Did her heart shrink from a vacuum, or what? Thus pride soon supplemented jealousy.

A few days after the third occasion on which he had seen them, he was idling in the reading-room of 'The Rag'—as the Army and Navy Club is colloquially known, from a joke in *Punch*, and the smoking-room of which has the reputation of being the best in London; and few, perhaps none, of those who lounge therein are aware that the stately edifice occupies what was the site till 1790 of Nell Gwynne's house in Pall Mall.

'How goes it, Hammersley?' said Villiers, the aide-de-camp, who was also home on leave, and *en route* to join his regiment, being yet—as he grumbly said—out of 'the Wolseley ring.' Has no Belgravian belle succeeded in capturing you yet—a hero, like myself, fresh from the assegaïs of Ulundi and all that sort of thing?

'No—I am still at large; but you forget that by the time I reached town the season was over.'

'Talking of belles,' said an officer who was lounging in a window, 'here comes one worth looking at.'

Finella and her cavalier, mounted again, were quietly rambling into the square from Pall Mall.

'Ah—she is with Garallan of the Bengal Cavalry,' said Villiers; 'he has come in for a good thing—has picked up an heiress, I hear.'

'About the most useful thing a fellow can pick up nowadays,' replied a tall officer named Gore.

‘That girl is said to be always ahead of the London season.’

‘How?’

‘Dresses direct from Paris.’

‘Garallan?’ said Hammersley, turning from the window, as the pair had disappeared.

‘A Major of the old Second Irregular Cavalry, and gained the V.C. when serving on the Staff at the storming of Jummoo.’

‘Jummoo—where the devil is that?’ asked one.

‘On the Peshawur frontier,’ replied another; ‘he is now in luck’s way, certainly.’

‘They say,’ resumed Villiers in his laughing off-hand way, and who really knew nothing of Finella, but was merely ventilating some club gossip, to the intense annoyance of Hammersley; ‘they say that she is a coquette from her finger-tips to her tiny balmorals, and would flirt with his Grace of Canterbury if she got a chance; and yet, with all that, she can be most sentimental. There is Gore of ours—a passed practitioner in the art of philandering——’

‘Villiers, please to shut up,’ said Ham-

mersley impatiently in a *sotto voce*; 'I know the young lady, and you don't.'

'The deuce you do?'

'Intimately.'

Villiers coloured, and lapsed into silence.

'I always look upon flirtation as playing with fire,' said Gore; 'never attempt it, but I get into some deuced scrape.'

'How much money is muddled up with matrimony in the world nowadays!' said Villiers, thinking probably of the heiress's thousands; 'I suppose it was different in the days of our grandfathers.'

'Not much, I fancy,' said Gore.

Hammersley had now occasion for much and somewhat bitter thought. Finella and this officer were evidently the subjects of club gossip and not very well-bred banter; the conviction galled him.

'Where the deuce or with whom does she reside?' he thought; 'but to find anyone you want, I don't know a more difficult place than this big village on Thames.'

The wrong person—like himself apparently—turning up at the wrong time is no new

experience to anyone ; but this intimacy of Finella and her cavalier seemed to be a daily matter, as Hammersley had seen them so often ; and how often were they too probably together on occasions that he could know nothing of ?

The germ of jealousy was now planted in his heart, and ‘such germs by force of circumstances sometimes flourish and bear bitter fruit ; at others, nothing assisting, they perish in the mind that gave them birth ;’ but a new force was given to the remarks of Villiers by some that Hammersley overheard the same evening in the same place—the ‘Rag.’

There he suddenly recognised Finella’s cavalier in full evening costume, eating his dinner alone in a corner of the great dining-room, and all unaware that he was sternly and closely scrutinized by one man, and the subject of conversation for other two, whose somewhat flippant remarks from behind a newspaper reached the ears of the former.

‘Who is he, do you say ? His face is new to me.’

'Ronald Garallan, of the Bengal Cavalry—a lucky dog.'

'How so?'

'Is going in for a good thing, I hear.'

'For what?'

'His cousin with no end of tin.'

'His cousin?' questioned the other and Hammersley's heart at the same time.

'Yes—the handsome Miss Melfort with the funny name—Finella Melfort.'

'So they are engaged?'

'I believe so; but I don't think from all I hear that the Major has much of a vocation for domesticity.'

'Even with Finella?'

'Even with Finella,' replied the other, laughing.

Hammersley felt a dark frown gather on his brow to hear her Christian name—*his* property as he deemed it—used in this off-hand fashion, and he felt a violent inclination to punch his brother-officer's head. However, he only moved his chair away from the vicinity of the speakers, but not before he heard one of them say to Garallan:

‘ Been to many dances since your return ? England, you know, expects every marriageable bachelor to do his duty.’

‘ The season is over,’ replied the Major curtly ; and then added, ‘ you forget that I am on leave—the sick list, with a Medical Board before me yet.’

‘ What a bore ! But you are bound for some festive scene to-night, I presume ?’

‘ Only to the Lyceum.’

‘ *The Lyceum*—with her perhaps,’ thought Hammersley ; and to see the affair out to the bitter end, he resolved to go there too.

He was cut to the heart again, and bit his nether lip to preserve his self-control. He had never heard of this cousin, Ronald Garallan ; he certainly found his name in the Army List, but did not believe he was any cousin at all ; and this only served to make matters look more and more black.

Hammersley in his natural pride of spirit rather revolted at going to the theatre, feeling as if he was acting somewhat like a spy, but he had a right to learn for himself what

was on the tapis with regard to Finella ; and the Lyceum was as free a theatre to him as to anyone else ; so a few minutes after saw him bowling along the Strand in a hansom cab.

He got a seat on the grand tier, but with difficulty, and, fortunately for his purpose, a little back and well out of sight ; and, oblivious of the stage and all the usual scenic splendours there, he swept 'the house' again and again, with the same powerful field-glass he had so lately used on many a scouting expedition, but in vain, till the crimson satin curtain of a private box was suddenly drawn back, and Finella in a perfect costume, yet not quite full dress, sat there like a little queen, with many a sparkling jewel, and Garallan half leaning on the back of her chair, as she consulted the programme, after depositing a beautiful bouquet and her opera-glass on the front of the box before her.

Hammersley's heart seemed to give a leap, and then stood still, while he actually felt an ache in the bullet wound which had so nearly cost him his life.

There they were, in a private box together, and without a chaperone, which certainly looked like cousinship, though every way distasteful to Hammersley; and Garallan leant over her chair, ignoring the performance entirely, and evidently entertaining her in 'that original and delicious strain in which Adam and Eve were probably the first proficient.''

And Finella was smiling upwards at times with her radiant eyes and *riant* face, with the bright and happy expression of one who had nothing left to wish for in the world; while he — Vivian Hammersley — might be, for all she knew or seemed to care, lying unburied by the banks of the Umvolosi or the Lower Tugela!

He recalled the words of her letter, so long and so loving, which he received so unexpectedly in Zululand, in which she urged him to be brave of heart for her sake, and not to be discouraged by any opposition on the part of Lady Fettercairn, as she was rich enough to please herself, adding:

'Let us have perfect confidence in each

other! Oh, you passionate silly! to run away in a rage as you did without seeking an explanation. How much it has cost me Heaven alone knows!

'Now,' thought he, 'suppose all the explanation she gave Miss Carlyon at Craigenrowan of that remarkable scene in the shrubbery, or that she was lured into a scrape with that cub Shafto, were mere humbug after all. It looks deuced like it from what I see going on here in London. And then the rings I gave her—one a marriage hoop to keep—an unlucky gift—ha! ha! what a precious ass I have been!'

Vivian Hammersley, though a tough-looking and well set-up linesman, was of an imaginative cast, and of a highly sensitive nature, and such are usually well skilled in the art of elaborate self-torture.

He now perceived that for a moment she had drawn the glove from off her left hand—what a lovely little white hand it was! He turned his powerful field-glass thereon, with more interest and curiosity than he had done while watching for Zulu warriors, and

there—yes—there by Jove!—his heart gave a bound—was his engagement ring upon her engaged finger still—there was no doubt about that!

So what did all this too apparent philandering with another mean, if not the most arrant coquetry? Had her character changed within a few short months? It almost seemed so.

But Hammersley thought that, ‘tide what may,’ he had seen enough of the Lyceum for that night, and hurried away to the smoking-room of the ‘Rag.’

CHAPTER XIII.

A REVELATION.

WE have written somewhat ahead of our general narrative, and must now recur to Lord Fettercairn's visit to Mr. Kenneth Kippilaw in Edinburgh, at that gentleman's request—one which filled the old Peer with some surprise.

‘Why the deuce did not his agent visit him?’ he thought.

Smarting under Shafto's insolence, and acting on information given to him readily by Madelon Galbraith, Mr. Kippilaw took certain measures to obtain some light on a matter which he should have taken before.

‘You look somewhat unhinged, Kippilaw,’ said Lord Fettercairn, as he seated himself in the former's private business room.

‘I feel so, my lord,’ replied the lawyer, in a fidgety way, as he breathed upon and wiped his spectacles; ‘I have to talk over an unpleasant matter with you.’

‘Business?’

‘Yes; perhaps you would defer it till after dinner?’

‘Not at all—what the deuce is it? Debts of Shafto’s?’

‘Worse, my lord!’

‘Worse! You actually seem unwell; have a glass of sherry, if I may press you in your own house.’

‘No thanks; I am in positive distress.’

‘How—about what?’ asked the Peer impatiently.

‘The fact is, my lord, I don’t know how to go about it and explain; but for the first time since I began my career as a W.S.—some forty years ago now—I have made a great professional blunder, I fear.’

‘Sorry to hear it—but what have I to do with all that?’

‘Much.’

Lord Fettercairn changed colour.

‘ You wrote strangely of Shafto ?’

‘ No wonder !’ groaned Mr. Kippilaw.

‘ How ?’

‘ The matter very nearly affects your lordship’s dearest interests—the honour of your house and title.’

‘ The devil !’ exclaimed the Peer, starting up, and touched upon his most tender point.

‘ I have had more than one long conversation with the old nurse, Madelon Galbraith, and therefore instituted certain inquiries, which I should have done before, and have come to the undoubted and legal conclusion that—that——’

‘ What ?’ asked Fettercairn, striking the floor with his right heel.

‘ That the person who passes as your grandson is not your grandson at all !’

‘ What—how—who the devil is he then ?’

‘ The son of a Miss MacIan who married a Mr. Shafto Gyle.’

‘ D——n the name ! Then who and where is my grandson and heir ?’

‘ One who was lately or is now serving as a soldier in Zululand.’

‘My God! and you tell me all this now—*now?*’

‘When Lennard Melfort lay dying at Revelstoke he entrusted the proofs of his only son’s birth with his older nephew, Shafto, who, with amazing cunning, used them to usurp his rights and position. I blame myself much. I should have made closer inquiries at the time; but the documents seemed all and every way to the point, and I could not doubt the handwriting or the signatures of your poor dead son. The result, however, has rather stunned me.’

‘And, d——n it, Kippilaw, it rather stuns me!’ exclaimed Lord Fettercairn, in high wrath. ‘May it not be a mistake, this last idea?’

‘No—everything is too well authenticated.’

‘But, Kippilaw,’ said Lord Fettercairn, after a pause, caused by dire perplexity, ‘we had the certificate of birth.’

‘Yes—but not in Shafto’s name. The document was mutilated and without the baptismal certificate, of which I have got

this copy from the Rev. Mr. Paul Pentreath. The name in both is, as you see,' added Mr. Kippilaw, laying the document on the table, 'Florian, only son of the Hon. Lennard Melfort (otherwise MacIan) and Flora, his wife—Florian, called so after her.'

'You have seen this young man?'

'Yes—once in this room, and I was struck with his likeness to Lennard. He is dark, Shafto fair. The true heir has a peculiar mark on his right arm, says Madelon Galbraith, his nurse. Here is a letter from a doctor of the regiment stating that Florian has such a mark, which Shafto has not ; and mother-marks, as they are called, never change, like the two marks of the famous "Claimant."'

'I cannot realize it all—that we have been so befooled!' exclaimed Lord Fettercairn, walking up and down the room.

'But you must ; it will come home to you soon enough.'

'Egad, so far as bills and debts go, it has come home to me sharply enough already. It is a terrible story—a startling one.'

‘ Few families have stories like it.’

‘ And one does not wish such in one’s own experience, Kippilaw. It is difficult of belief—monstrous, Kippilaw!’

‘ Monstrous, indeed, my Lord Fettercairn!’ chimed in Mr. Kippilaw, who then proceeded to unfold a terrible tale of the results of Shafto’s periodical visits to Edinburgh and London—his bills and post-obits with the money-lenders, who would all be ‘diddled’ now, as he proved not to be the heir at all; and though last, not least, his late disgraceful affair of the loaded die, and the fracas with Major Garallan.

‘ Garallan! that old woman Drumshoddy’s nephew—whew!’ His lordship perspired with pure vexation. ‘I have to thank you, however, for finding out the true heir at last.’

‘ When there are a fortune and a title in the case, people are easily found, my lord.’

‘ Things come right generally, as they always do, if one waits and trusts in God,’ said Madelon Galbraith, when she was admitted to an audience, in which, with the

garrulity of years, she supplemented all that Mr. Kippilaw had advanced; and, as she laughed with exultation, she showed—despite her age—two rows of magnificent teeth—teeth that were bright as her eyes were dark.

‘Laoghe mo chri! Laoghe mo chri!’ she murmured to herself; ‘your only son will be righted yet.’

Every nation has its own peculiar terms of endearment, so Madelon naturally referred to Flora in her own native Gaelic.

‘And Florian is—as you say, Kippilaw—serving in Zululand?’ said Lord Fettercairn.

‘Yes.’

‘Serving as a private soldier?’

‘He was——’

‘*Was*—is he dead?’ interrupted the Peer sharply.

‘No; he is now an officer, and a distinguished one—an officer of the gallant but most unfortunate 24th. I have learned that much.’

‘Write to him at once, and meanwhile

telegraph to the Adjutant-General — no matter what the expense—for immediate intelligence about him. You will also write to Shafto—you know what to say to *him*.'

With right goodwill Mr. Kippilaw hastened to obey the Peer's injunctions in both instances.

He wrote to Shafto curtly, relating all that had transpired, adding that he (Shafto) could not retain his present position for another day without risking a public trial, and that if he would confess the vile and cruel imposture of which he had been guilty he might escape being sent to prison, and obtaining perhaps 'permanent employment' in the Perth Penitentiary.

This letter — though not unexpected — proved a most bitter pill to Shafto! He saw that 'the game was up' — his last card played, that life had no more in it for him, and that there was nothing left for him but to fly the country and his debts together.

His face was set hard, and into his shifty grey eyes came the savage gleam one may see in those of a cat before it springs, but

with this expression were mingled rage and fear.

With Mr. Kippilaw's letter were two others, from different parties. In one he was informed that legal proceedings had been taken against him, and in default of his putting in an appearance, judgment for execution and costs had been given against him in an English court, for £847 16s. 8d., in favour of a Jew, who held another bill, which, though it originally represented £400, would cost £800 before he parted with it; and Shafto actually laughed a little bitter and discordant laugh as he rent the lawyers' letters into fragments and cast them to the wind.

Before departing, however, and before his story transpired, he contrived to borrow from the butler and housekeeper every spare pound they possessed, and quietly went forth, portmanteau in hand.

Did he as he thus left the house recall the auspicious day on which he had first seen, with keen and avaricious exultation, Craigen-gowan in all its baronial beauty, its wealth of

pasture and meadow - land, of wood, and moor, and mountain, and deemed that all—all were, or would be, his ?

He turned his back on the Howe of the Mearns for ever, and from that hour all trace of him was lost !

* * * * *

The reply to Mr. Kippilaw's telegram to South Africa gave him, and even his noble client, cause for some anxiety.

It was dated from Headquarters, Ulundi, on the last day of August, and stated that Lieutenant MacIan 'was down with fever, and not expected to live.'

So—if he died—the title of Fettercairn, being a Scottish one, would go to Finella, and the heir male of whosoever she married.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN THE NGOME FOREST.

WE now approach the last scenes of Florian's foreign service.

By the 13th of August the cordon of European troops and Native lines drawn round the district in which the fugitive King of the Zulus lurked had been drawn closer, and it was now distinctly known at headquarters in Ulundi that he had sought refuge in the Forest of Ngome, a wild, most savage and untrodden district between two rivers (with long and grotesque names), tributaries of the Black Umvolosi, and overshadowed by a mountain chain called the Ngome.

Various parties detailed for the pursuit, search, and capture failed, till, on the 26th

August, the Chief of the Staff received information indicating where Cetewayo was certain to be found, and Major Marter, of the King's Dragoon Guards, was ordered to proceed next day in that direction with a squadron of his own regiment, a company of the Native Contingent, Lonsdale's Horse, and a few Mounted Infantry, led by Florian and another officer. The former was already suffering from fever caught by exposure to the night dews when scouting, and felt so weak and giddy that at times he could barely keep in his saddle; but, full of youthful ardour and zeal, fired by the promotion and praises he had won, he was anxious only, if life were spared him, to see the closing act of the great campaign in South Africa.

The early morning of the 27th saw the Horse depart, the King's Dragoon Guards leading the way, after the Mounted Infantry scouts; and picturesque they looked in their bright scarlet tunics and white helmets, with accoutrements glittering as they rode in Indian file through the scenery of the

tropical forest, and then for a time debouched upon open ground.

Nodding in his saddle, Florian felt spiritless and sick at heart, wishing intensely that the last act was over.

Far in the distance around extended a range of mountains that were purple and blue in their hues, even against the greenish-blue of the sky, and vast tracts of wood, tinted with every hue of green, red, and golden; in the foreground were brawling streams dashing through channels of rock to join the Black Umvolosi, under graceful date palms, mimosa trees, and the undergrowth of baboon ropes and other giant trailers. Scared troops of the eland, grey and brown herds of fleet antelopes glided past, and more than once the roar of a lion made the wilderness re-echo.

And this ground had to be traversed under a fierce and burning sun till the valley of the Ivuno River was reached, prior to which three Dragoon Guard horses were carried off and devoured by lions.

So passed the day. The party reached a

lonely little kraal on the summit of the Nenyé Mountain, and bivouacked there for the night.

Stretched on the floor of a hut, after drinking thirstily of some weak brandy and water, Florian watched the blood-red disc of the sun, mightier than it is ever seen in Europe, amid the luminous haze, begin to disappear behind the verge of the vast forest—the sea of timber—that spread below, casting forward in dark outline the quaint and grotesque euphorbia trees that at times take the shape of Indian idols.

Then a mist stole over the waste below, and a single star shone out with wondrous brilliance.

Florian was so weak in the morning that he would fain have abandoned the duty on which he had come, and remained in the hut at the kraal; but to linger behind was only to court death by the teeth of wild animals or the hands of scouting Zulus, so wearily he clambered, rather than sprang as of old, into his saddle.

‘Pull yourself together, if you can, my

dear fellow,' said an officer; 'our task will soon be over. It is something after a close run to be in at the death; and it is waking men with their swords, not dreamers with their pens, who make history.'

'I am no dreamer,' said Florian, scarcely seeing the point of the other's remark.

'I did not mean that you were,' said the other, proffering his cigar-case; 'have a weed?'

But Florian shook his head with an emotion of nausea.

'Forward, in single file from the right,' was the order given, for the sun would soon be up now. Already the bees were humming loudly among the tall reeds and giant flowers beside the stream that flowed downward from the kraal, the forest stems looked black or bronze-like in the grey and then crimson dawn, while the stars faded out fast.

In advancing to another kraal on the mountain, Major Marter's force had to traverse the forest bush, where trees of giant height and girth, matted and inter-

woven by baboon ropes and other trailers, shut out even the fierce sun of Africa, and made a cool green roof or leafy shade, where the grass grew tall as a Grenadier, where hideous apes barked and chattered, bright-hued parrots croaked or screamed, and where nature seemed to have run wild in unbridled luxuriance since the Ark rested on Ararat, and the waters of the flood subsided.

The mountains of the Ngome, and overlooking the forest of that name, are flat-topped, like all others in South Africa; but Major Marter found the western slope to be dangerously precipitous, and thence he and his guides looked down into a densely wooded valley, lying more than two thousand feet below.

About two miles distant, thin smoke could be seen ascending amid the greenery, from a small kraal by the side of a brawling stream, and therein Cetewayo was known to be.

As cavalry could not reach the bottom without making a very long detour, the Major ordered all the mounted men to lay aside their bright steel scabbards, and all

other accoutrements likely to create a rattling noise, and these, with the pack horses, were left in charge of a small party, the command of which was offered to the sinking Florian, who foolishly declined, and rode with the rest to a less precipitous slope of the hills three miles distant, down which the Dragoon Guards led their chargers by the bridle, crossed the stream referred to, a small fence, and a marsh, and, remounting, made a dash for the kraal, sword in hand, from the north, while the Native Contingent formed up south of it on some open ground.

The capture of Cetewayo is an event too recent to be detailed at length here.

It is known how his few followers, on seeing the red-coated cavalry riding up, shouted, in unison with the Native Contingent:

‘The white men are here—you are taken!’

Then the fallen royal savage came forth, looking weary, weak, and footsore; and when a soldier—Tom Tyrrell—attempted to seize him, he drew himself up with an air of simple dignity, and repelled him.

‘Touch me not, white soldier!’ he ex-

claimed ; ' I am a King, and surrender only to your chief.'

With their prisoner strictly guarded, the party passed the night of the 29th August in the forest of Ngome, and Florian, as he flung himself on the dewy grass, with fevered limbs and aching head, felt an emotion of thankfulness that all was over, and it was nearly so with himself now !

The moon had not yet risen ; the darkness was dense around the hut where lay Cete-wayo, guarded by many a sabre and bayonet ; and the jackals and hyenas were making night hideous with their howling, mingled at times with the yells of wild dogs.

Ever and anon the barking of baboons, as they swung themselves from branch to branch, seemed to indicate the approach of some great beast of prey, and the crackle of dry twigs suggested the slimy crawling of a poisonous snake.

So passed the night in the Forest of Ngome. With dawn the trumpet sounded ' To horse,' and again the whole party moved on the homeward way to Ulundi. The

night in the dreary forest, lying out in the open, had done its worst for Florian. On reaching the camp he fell from his saddle into the arms of the watchful Tom Tyrrell, and was carried to his tent, prostrate and delirious.

Hence the tenor of the telegram received from the medical staff by Mr. Kenneth Kippilaw.

How Florian lived to reach Durban, conveyed there with other sick in the ambulance waggons, he never knew, so heavily was the hand of fever laid on him ; but many a time he had seen, as in a dream, the horses struggling through bridgeless torrents, and graves dug amid the pathless wastes for those who died on the route, and were laid therein, rolled in their blanket, and covered up before their limbs were cold, till at last the village of Durban—for it is little else, though the principal seaport of Natal—was reached, and he was placed in an extemporised hospital.

In his weakness, after the delirium passed away, he felt always as one in a dream. The windows were open to the breeze from the

Indian Ocean, and the roar of the surf could be heard without ceasing on the sandy beach, while at night the sharp crescent moon shone like a silver sabre in the clear blue sky, and, laden with the perfume of many tropical plants, the sweet air without struggled with the close atmosphere of the crowded hospital wards, in which our 'boy soldiers died like sick flies,' as a general officer reported.

And there he lay, hour after hour, wasted by the fever born of miasma and the jungle, rigid and corpse-like in outline, under the light white coverlet. For how long or how short this was to last no one ventured to surmise.

He had ceased now to toss to and fro on his pillow and pour forth incoherent babble, in which Revelstoke, Dulcie Carlyon, his boyish days, and the recent stirring events of the now-ended campaign were all strangely woven together, while Tom Tyrrell, now his constant attendant, who nursed him tenderly as a woman would have done, had listened with alarm and dismay. And more than once Florian had dreamed that Tom, bearded to

the eyes, bronzed to negro darkness, and clad in an old patched regimental tunic, was not Tom at all, but Dulcie, the girl he loved so passionately, watching there, smoothing his pillow and holding the cup with its cooling draught to his parched lips.

‘They say that fever must run its course, sir, whatever that means,’ said Tom to the doctor.

‘Ah! a fever like this is a very touch-and-go affair,’ responded old Gallipot, in whom the telegrams from headquarters and from Edinburgh had given a peculiar interest for his patient.

‘Am I dying, doctor—don’t fear to tell me?’ asked the latter suddenly in a low, husky voice.

‘Why do you ask, my poor fellow?’ replied the doctor, bending over him.

‘I mean simply, is the end of this illness—death?’

‘To tell you the truth, I greatly fear it is,’ replied the doctor, shaking his head.

‘God’s will be done!’ said Florian resignedly. ‘Well, well, perhaps it is better

so—I am so far gone—but Dulcie !’ he added to himself in a husky whisper—‘ poor Dulcie, alone—all alone !’

His senses had quite returned now, but he was so weak that he could neither move hand nor foot, and his eyelids, unable to uphold their own weight, closed as soon as raised, and often while his parched tongue clove to the roof of his mouth as he lay thus he was supposed to be asleep.

‘ Poor fellow !’ he heard Tom Tyrrell whisper to an hospital orderly in a broken voice ; ‘ he’s got his marching orders, and will soon be off—yet he doesn’t seem to suffer much.’

How hard it was to die so young, with what should have been a long life before him, and now one with honours won to make it valuable.

Well, well, he thought, if it was God’s will it would be no worse for him than for others. It seemed as natural to die as to be born—our place in the world is vacant before and after ; but yet, again, it *was* hard, he thought, to die, and die so young in a distant and bar-

barous land, where the savage, the wild animal, and the Kaffir vulture would be the only loiterers near his lonely and unmarked grave.

There came a day when the scene changed to him again. He was in the cabin of a ship, lying near an open port-hole, through which he could see the ocean rippling like molten gold in the setting sun, the red light of which bathed in ruddy tints the shore of Durban and the white lighthouse on the bluff that guards its entrance.

Anon he heard the tramp overhead of the seamen as they manned the capstan bars and tripped merrily round to the sound of drum and fife, heaving short on the anchor, and heaving with a will, till it was apeak. Then the canvas was let fall and sheeted home; the revolution of the screw-propeller was felt to make the great 'trooper' vibrate in all her length, and the glittering waves began to roll astern as she sped on her homeward way.

Would he live to see the end of the voyage? It seemed very problematical.

CHAPTER XV.

THE MAJOR PROPOSES.

MEANWHILE Hammersley's suspicion and jealousy grew apace, and it has been said that when the latter emotion begins to reason, we legally 'always hold a brief for the prosecution in such cases, and admit no evidence save that which tends to a conviction.'

In his rage he thought of quitting London and going—but where? He knew not then precisely.

'Oh, to be well and strong again!' he would mutter; 'out of this place and back to the regiment and the old life. There is a shindy brewing fast in the Transvaal, and that will be the place for me.'

At other times he would think—'I wish

that recruit of Cardwell's had put his bullet through my brain. I would rather he had done so than feel it throb as it does now.'

Some loves may dwindle into indifference or turn to hatred, but seldom or never to mere friendship. Yet it is not easy 'to hate those we have once loved because we happen to discover a weak point in their armour, any more than it is easy to love unlovable people because of their resplendent virtues.'

No response had ever come to the letters he had written Finella under cover to Dulce; thus he ceased to send them, all unaware that these letters addressed to 'Miss Carylton' had been returned to the Post Office, endorsed, by order of Lady Fettercairn, 'not known at Craigengowan;' and now the heavy thoughts of Hammersley affected his manner and gait, and thus he often walked slowly, as if he were weary; and so he was weary and sick of heart, for the sense of hope being dead within the breast will give a droop to the head and a lagging air to the step.

Lady Drumshoddy rented a grand old-fashioned house in that very gloomy quad-

range called St. James's Square, the chief mansion in which is that of his Grace of Norfolk, and round the still somewhat scurvy enclosure of which Dr. Johnson and Savage, when friendless and penniless, spent many a summer night with empty stomachs and hearts heated with antagonism to the then Government. About a hundred years before that, Macaulay tells us that St. James's Square 'was a receptacle for all the offal and cinders, and all the dead cats and dogs, of Westminster. At one time a cudgel-player kept his ring there. At another an impudent squatter settled himself there, and built a shed for rubbish under the windows of the gilded *salons* in which the first magnates of the realm—Norfolk, Ormond, Kent, and Pembroke—gave banquets and balls. It was not till these nuisances had lasted through a whole generation, and till much had been written about them, that the inhabitants applied to Parliament for permission to put up rails and plant trees.'

Here, then, in this now fashionable locality, had my Lady Drumshoddy pitched her tent,

and hence it was that Vivian Hammersley, being almost daily at 'The Rag,' close by, saw Finella and her cousin so frequently; yet it never occurred to him to think of the old Scoto-Indian Judge's widow, of whom he knew little or nothing.

The circumstance that Finella was undoubtedly still wearing his engagement ring made Hammersley, amid all his misery and anger, long for some more certain information than mere Club gossip and banter afforded, and for that which was due from her—an explicit explanation. He thought, as a casuist has it, 'that to know her false would not be so bitter as to doubt. To mistrust the woman we love is torture. To have a knowledge of her guilt is the first step towards burying our love. Our pride is then thoroughly aroused, and that contempt for treachery, inherent in our nature, flames out.'

On her part, Finella had some cause for pique—grave cause, she thought. She had twice, at intervals, seen Vivian Hammersley riding in the Row, when it was impossible for her to address him or afford him the

least sign ; and now, knowing that he was home, and in London, she naturally thought why did he not make some effort to communicate with her, in spite of any barrier Lady Fettercairn might raise between them, if he supposed she still resided at Craigengowan. Thus she too was beginning to look regretfully back to his love as a dream that had fled.

‘A pretty kettle of fish they have made of it at Craigengowan, my dear!’ snorted Lady Drumshoddy, when she heard of the late events that had transpired there. ‘They have been imposed upon fearfully — quite another “Claimant” affair ; but I always had my suspicions, my dear—I always had my suspicions, I am glad to say,’ she coolly added, oblivious of the fact that she always aided and abetted Shafto in all his plans and hopes to secure Finella and her fortune.

It was convenient to ignore or forget all that now.

‘My Ronald is all right,’ snorted the hard-featured old dame to herself ; ‘he is the right man in the right place ; but, as for

Finella, she is like most girls, I suppose—will not fall in love where and when it is most clearly her duty to do so—provoking minx!’

It was a prominent feature in the character of my Lady Drumshoddy, contradiction, though she would not for a second tolerate it in anyone else; and as Major Garallan was temporarily a resident at her house in St. James’s Square, she, like Lady Fettercairn on the other occasion, put great faith in cousinship and propinquity.

What a different kind and style of cousin Ronald Garallan was from Shafto, Finella naturally thought; not that as yet she loved him a bit, as he evidently loved her, but he was such a delightful companion to escort her everywhere.

She had received plenty of admiration and adulation during her short season in London before, and to suppose that she was blind to the young Major’s attentions would be to deem her foolish; no woman or girl is ever blind to that sort of thing. She, like the rest of her charming sex, knew by instinct when

she had won a success ; but she also knew that she had one powerful attraction—money—and knew, too, that her heart was engaged otherwise ; and this knowledge made her tolerably indifferent to the admiration of her cousin, while the indifference laid her open to the appearance of receiving his close attentions. Meanwhile the latter was enjoying his Capua.

‘How delicious all this is!’ he often thought, as he lounged by Finella’s side in the drawing-room, or rode with her in the Row, ‘after sweltering so long in that hottest and most hateful of up-country stations, Jehanabad, on the shining rocks of which the Indian sun pours all its rays for months, till the granite at night gives out the caloric it has absorbed by day, and so the roasting process never ceases, and sleep even on a charpoy becomes impossible, all the more so that hyenas, jackals, and wild cats make night hideous with their yells. This is indeed an exchange,’ he once added aloud, ‘and all the more delicious that I have it with *you*, Cousin Finella.’

And Lady Drumshoddy, if she was near, would watch the pair complacently through her great spectacles, while pretending to be intent on her only paper (after the *Morning Post*), the *Queen*, which she read as regularly—more so, we fear—than she read her night prayers.

And while Garallan's attentions were gradually warming and leading up to a declaration, Finella was thinking angrily of Hammersley.

‘Perhaps he has forgotten his love for me—nay, he would never forget *that*! but absence, time, change of scene, or a regard for some one else may have come between us. It is the way with men, I have been told.’

So, in the fulness of time, there came one fine forenoon, when Lady Drumshoddy had judiciously left the cousins quite alone, and when Finella, in one of her most bewitching costumes, was idling over a book of prints, with Ronald Garallan by her side, admiring the contour of her head, the curve of her neck, her pure profile, the lovely little ear

that was next him, and everything else, to the little bouquet in her bosom that rose and fell with every respiration, let his passion completely overmaster him, and taking caressingly within his own her left hand, which she did not withdraw, he said :

‘ I have something to ask you, Finella—you know what it is ?’

‘ Indeed, I do not.’

‘ Then, of course, I must tell you ?’

‘ I think you must,’ said she, looking him calmly in the face for a second.

‘ For weeks you must have known it.’

‘ Known—what ?’

‘ That I love you !’ he said in a low voice, and bending till his moustache touched her cheek ; ‘ and now I ask you to give me yourself.’

The hand was withdrawn now ; she coloured, but not deeply, and her eyelashes drooped.

‘ Give me yourself, darling,’ he resumed, ‘ and trust to me for taking care of you all the days of your life.’

Though she must have expected some

such ending as this to their late hourly intimacy, she was nevertheless astonished, and said, with a little nervous laugh at the abruptness and matter-of-fact form of the proposal :

‘Cousin Ronald, I can surely take care of myself. But—but do you want to marry me?’

‘Of course!’ replied Cousin Ronald, with very open eyes, while tugging the ends of his moustache.

‘Well—it can’t be.’

‘Can’t be?’

‘No. I thank you very much, and like you very much—there are both my hands on that; but marriage is impossible. Yet don’t let us quarrel, for that would be absurd, but be the best of good friends as ever.’

‘And this is my answer?’ said he, with a very crushed air.

‘Yes,’ she replied, colouring deeply now; ‘once and for all.’

‘I won’t take it,’ said he, with mingled sorrow and anger. ‘I will not, darling!—I shall come to it again, when, perhaps, you

may think better of it and of me. Till then good-bye, and God bless you, dearest Finella !'

Kissing both her hands, he abruptly withdrew, and soon after leaving the house took his departure for Brighton ; and now the luckless Finella had to explain the reason thereof, and to undergo the ever-recurring admonitions, reprehensions, parables, and absolute scoldings of 'grandmamma Drumshoddy,' who was neither quite so well bred nor so calm in spirit and outward bearing as Lady Fettercairn, then 'eating humble pie' at Craigengowan.

If Florian, the new heir, was indeed dying, as reported, when he was embarked with other sick and wounded officers and men at Durban, a prospective peerage, with all the estates, enhanced the value and position of Finella in the eyes of Lady Drumshoddy, so far as a marriage with her nephew, the Major, was concerned, and most wrathful she was indeed to find that her schemes were going 'agee.'

Lord Fettercairn fully shared her ideas,

and knew that whoever married the only daughter of the House of Melfort, though he might assume the old name, it and the title too went virtually out of the family.

Finella had remarked to herself that for some time past Lady Fettercairn in her letters never mentioned the name of Shafto, or hinted of the old wish about marrying *him*.

Why was this?

She knew not the reason that his existence was ignored, till Lady Drumshoddy bluntly referred to 'the pretty kettle of fish' made lately by the folks at Craigengowan, and then, in the gentleness of her heart, Finella almost felt pitiful for the now homeless and worthless one.

CHAPTER XVI.

A CLOUD DISPELLED.

SEPTEMBER was creeping on, and in London then the weather is often steady and pleasant, though in the mornings and evenings the first chills of the coming winter begin to be felt. The summer-parched and dust-laden foliage of the trees droops in Park and square, and the great gorse-bushes are all in golden bloom at Wimbledon, at Barnes Common, and other fern and heath-covered wastes.

The Row and other favourite promenades were now empty ; Parliament was not sitting ; and shooting and cub-hunting were in full force in the country.

Sooner or later one runs up against every one in this whirligig world of ours ; thus

Hammersley, still lingering aimlessly in London, coming one day from the Horse Guards, in crossing the east end of the Mall, found himself suddenly face to face with her of whom his thoughts were full—Finella Melfort!

Finella, in a smart sealskin jacket, with her muff slung by a silken cord round her slender neck, a most becoming hat, the veil of which was tied tightly and piquantly across her short upper lip.

‘Finella!’

‘Oh, Vivian!’

Their exclamations and joyful surprise were mutual, but ‘the horns and hoofs of the green-eyed monster’ were still obtruding amid the thoughts of Hammersley, though she frankly gave him both her plump little tightly gloved hands, which after a caressing pressure he speedily dropped, rather to the surprise of the charming proprietor thereof.

‘Did you know I was in London?’ she asked.

‘Yes—too well.’

‘And yet made no effort to see—to write to me!’

‘I knew not where to find you.’

‘You might have inquired—that is, if you cared to know.’

‘Cared—oh, Finella!’

‘And your wound—your cruel wound! Have you recovered from it?’

‘Nearly so—thus I have just been at the Horse Guards about going on foreign service again.’

‘Foreign service—again?’

‘Yes; there are wounds deeper and more lasting than any an enemy can inflict.’

She evidently did not understand his mood.

‘Are you not rash, Vivian, to be out in a day so chill as this?’ she said.

‘A little chill, fog, or rain, more or less, are trifles to one whose thoughts are all of sad and bitter things.’

‘Vivian?—your wound, was it a severe one?’

‘Very. I received a shot that was meant for the assassination of another.’

‘Who?’

‘Florian; your friend Miss Carlyon’s lover, who, poor fellow, I hear sailed from Durban in a bad way.’

‘Why do you look and speak so coldly, Vivian—Vivian?’ she asked, with her slender fingers interlaced, while he certainly eyed her wistfully, curiously, and even angrily.

‘Why?’

‘Yes,’ said she, impetuously. ‘Why are you so cruel—so hard to me?’ she added, with a sob in her voice, as she placed a hand on his arm and looked earnestly up in his face. ‘Surely it is not for me to plead thus?’

‘Why are you so touched?’

‘Can you ask, while treating me thus?’

‘Like a thorough Scotch girl, you answer one question by asking another.’

‘Well, in constancy men certainly do not bear the palm,’ said she, drawing back a pace, and inserting her hands in her muff.

‘I think you should be the last to taunt me, at all events, as appearances go.’

There was a moment’s silence, for both

were too honest and true to have acquired what has been termed 'the useful and social art of talking platitudes' when their hearts were full.

'And this is our long-looked-forward-to meeting?' she said, reproachfully.

'Yes—alas!'

'Why do you regard me—not with the furious rage that possessed you on quitting Craigengowan—but with coldness, doubt, indifference?'

'Indifference! Oh, no, Finella.'

'Doubt—suspicion, then?'

'It may be,' he replied with a doggedness that certainly was not natural to him.

'What *have* I done?' asked the girl, sorely piqued now.

'Nothing, perhaps,' he replied shrinking from putting his thoughts into words.

'Can it be that you are changeable and inconstant? When you saw me, and knew that I was in London, why did you not come to me at once?'

'Because I knew not where or with whom you were residing.'

‘ Did you go to Fettercairn House ?’

‘ No.’

‘ Why ?’ she asked curtly, for *her* suspicions were being kindled now.

‘ I knew the family were not in town.’

‘ Then you might have asked for Lady Drumshoddy, and, if not, somehow have heard——’

‘ By tipping the butler or Mr. James Plush ?’

‘ If I wanted to do anything I would grasp at the first chance of achieving it,’ said Finella, her dark eyes sparkling now.

‘ Men are seldom creatures of impulse. I reasoned over the matter, and put two and two together.’

‘ Reason generally urges men to do what they wish. But what do you mean by putting two and two together ?’

‘ Well, frankly, I referred to you and Major Garallan.”

‘ Do you make *four* of us ? Vivian, you are absurd,’ said Finella, after a little pause, during which she coloured and stamped a little foot impatiently on the ground.

‘ Perhaps,’ said he sadly and wearily ; ‘ but

I heard so much at the Clubs and elsewhere that I knew not what to think.'

'About us you mean—Cousin Ronald and me?'

'Yes.'

'You heard—what?'

'That you were about to be married—that is the long and the short of it.'

His face crimsoned with annoyance as he spoke; but hers grew pale.

'And you, Vivian—you believed this?' she asked mournfully and reproachfully.

'Much that I saw seemed to confirm it. You and he were so much together.'

'How unfortunate I am to have been suspected by you twice! Ronald is only my cousin.'

'So was that precious Shafto!'

'Why hark back upon that episode?' she asked, piteously. 'Have I offended you? Misunderstanding between us seems to have become our normal state.'

'Your cousin may—nay, I doubt not, loves you, Finella; but why do you permit him to do so?'

‘Can I help it? Ronald was a kind of brother to me—nothing more,’ she continued, ignoring—perhaps at that moment forgetting—his recent proposal; ‘but my heart has never for a moment wandered from you. See!’ she added, while quickly and nervously stripping the kid glove from her right hand, ‘your engagement ring has never, for a second even, been off my finger since first you placed it there.’

‘My darling—my darling!’ he exclaimed, as all his heart went forth towards her. ‘Oh, Finella! what I suffered when I thought I had again lost you! Yet I would almost undergo it all again—for this!’ he added, as he passionately kissed her, after a swift glance round to see that no one was nigh.

So the reconciliation was complete; all doubts were dissipated, and they lingered long together, talking of themselves and a thousand kindred topics, in which foreign service was *not* included; and more complete it was, when, after escorting her home (Lady Drumshoddy being absent at Exeter Hall), in the solitude of the drawing-room, they had

a sweeter lingering still, Finella's head resting on his shoulder, the touch of her cheek thrilling through him, and like some tender and tuneful melody her soft cooing voice seemed to vibrate in his head and heart together.

So they were united again after all !

At last they had to separate, and looking forward to a visit on the morrow, Hammersley, seeming to tread on air, in a state of radiance, both in face and mind, hurried across the square to the Club, where he came suddenly upon Villiers, whom he had not seen for some days, and who seemed rather curiously to resent his evident state of high spirits.

'Well, Villiers,' said he, 'you do look glum, by Jove! What is the matter now—the Wolseley ring, and all that—the service going to the dogs!'

'You know deuced well that it *has* gone—went with the regimental system. No; it is a cursed affair of my own. I have been robbed.'

'Robbed—how—and of what?'

'My pocket-book, containing some valu-

able papers and more than £500 in Bank of England notes.'

'Good heavens! I hope you have the numbers?'

'No—never noted such a thing in my life. Who but a careful screw would do so?'

'How came it about?'

'Well, you see,' said Villiers slowly, while manipulating a cigar, 'I took a run over to Ostend, and there, as the devil would have it, at the Casino, and afterwards in the mail boat to Dover, I fell in with a charming Belgienne, an awfully pretty and seductive creature, who was on her way to London and quite alone. We had rather a pronounced flirtation, and exchanged photos—an act of greater folly on her part than on mine, as the event proved; for, after taking mine from my pocket-book (which she could see was full of notes), I never saw the latter again. I dropped asleep, but awoke when the tickets were collected—awoke to find that she had slipped out at some intermediate station, and the pocket-book, which I had placed in my breast-pocket, was gone too! There had been no one else

in the carriage with me—indeed I had quietly tipped the guard to arrange it so. Thus, as no trace of it could be found, after the most careful search, she must have deftly abstracted it. Here is her photo—a deuced dear work of art to me !’

‘She is pretty, indeed!’ exclaimed Hammersley; ‘such a quantity of beautiful fair hair !’

‘It was dark golden.’

‘Surely it was rash of her to give you this ?’

‘It was vanity, perhaps, when the idea of theft had not occurred to her.’

‘Throw it in the fire.’

‘Not at all.’

‘What do you mean to do with it—preserve the iikeness of a mere adventuress ?’

‘I shall give it to the police as a clue. It may lead to the recovery of my money, and, what is of more consequence to me, my correspondence.’

So the photo of the pretty Belgienne was handed over to the authorities ; but neither Villiers nor Hammersley could quite foresee what it was to lead to.

CHAPTER XVII.

FLORIAN DYING.

AFTER her flight from Craigengowan to London, Dulcie had found shelter in the same house wherein she had lodged after leaving Revelstoke, in a gloomy alley that opens northward off Oxford Street. The vicar, on whose protection and interest she relied, was not in London, and would be absent therefrom for fully a month ; so she had written to Mr. Pentreath, who quietly, but firmly rebuked her for her folly in quitting Craigengowan, and expressed his dismay that she should be alone and unprotected in London, and urged her to come to him, in Devonshire, at once.

But Dulcie remembered his slender income, his pinched household, and notwith-

standing all the dear and sad associations of Revelstoke, she remained in London, thinking that amid its mighty world something would be sure to turn up.

The solitude of her little room was so great that times there were when she thought she might go mad from pure inanition and loneliness; but greater still seemed the solitude of the streets, which, crowded as they were by myriads passing to and fro, were without one friend for her.

She was not without her occasional *chateaux en Espagne*—dreams of relations, rich but as yet unknown, who would seek her out and cast a sunshine on her life; but how sordid seemed all her surroundings after the comfort and luxury, the splendour and stateliness, of Craigengowan!

Dulcie had once had her girlish dreams of life in London, at a time when the chances of her ever being there were remote indeed—dreams that were as the glittering scenes in a pantomime; and now, in her loneliness, she was appalled by the great Babylon, so terrible in its vastness, so hideous in its

monotony as a wilderness of bricks and bustle by day, bustle and gas by night, with its huge and dusky dome over all, with its tens upon thousands of vehicles of every kind—a whirling vortex, cleft in two by a river of mud and slime, where the corpses of suicides and the murdered are ploughed up by steamers and dredges—a river that perhaps hides more crime and dreadful secrets than any other in Europe ; and amid the seething masses of the great Babylon she felt herself as a grain of sand on the seashore.

Our neighbours next door know us not, nor care to know ; and to the postman, the milkman, and the message-boy we are only ‘a number’ as long as we pay—nothing more.

So times there were when Dulcie longed intensely for the home of her childhood, with its shady Devonshire lanes redolent of ripe apples, wild honeysuckle, and the sycamore-trees, and for the midges dancing merrily in the clear sunshine above the stream in which she and Florian were wont to fish together : and but for Shafto and Lady Fettercairn she

would have gladly hailed Craigengowan, with its ghost-haunted Howe, its old gate of the legend, Queen Mary's Thorn, and all their lonely adjuncts, could she but share them with Finella ; but she was all unaware that the latter was there no longer.

Her little stock of money was wearing out, with all her care and frugality, and her whole hope lay in the return of the vicar, who, too probably, would also reproach her with precipitation.

' Things will come right yet—they always do—if one knows how to wait and trust in God,' said Dulcie to herself, hopefully but tearfully ; ' and when two love each other,' she added, thinking of Florian, ' they may beat Fate itself.'

Dulcie had not written to Finella, as she was yet without distinct plans ; she only knew that she could not teach, and thus was not ' cut out ' for a governess. Neither did she write to Florian, as she knew not where to address him, and, knowing not what a day might bring forth, she could not indicate where she was to send an answer. So week

followed week ; her sweet hopefulness began to leave her, and a presentiment came upon her that she would never see Florian again. So many misfortunes had befallen her that this would only be one more ; and this presentiment seemed to be realised, and a dreadful shock was given, when by the merest chance she saw in a paper a few weeks old the same telegram concerning him which had so excited old Mr. Kippilaw, and which had found its way into print, as everything seems to do nowadays.

The transport with sick and wounded was on its homeward way ; but when it arrived would he be with it, or sleeping under the waves ?

It was a dreadful stroke for Dulcie ; her only tie to earth seemed to be passing or to have passed away. She had no one to confide in, no one to condole with her, and for a whole day never quitted her pillow ; but, ‘at twenty, one must be constitutionally very unsound if grief is to kill one, or even to leave any permanent and abiding mark of its presence.’ But she had to undergo the

terrible mental torture of waiting—waiting, with idle hands, with throbbing head, and aching heart, for the bulletin that might crush her whole existence. He whom she loved with all her heart and soul, who had been woven up with her life, since childhood, was far away upon the sea, struggling it might be with death, and she was not by his pillow ; and the lips, that had never aught but soft and tender words for her, might be now closed for ever !

Already hope had been departing, we have said. Her heart was now heavy as lead, and all the brightness of youth seemed to have gone out of her life. She began to feel a kind of dull apathetic misery, most difficult to describe, yet mingled with an aching, gnawing sense of mingled pain.

Florian dying, probably—that was the latest intelligence of him. How curt, how brief, how cruel seemed that item of news, among others !

She opened her silver locket, with the coloured photo of him. The artist had caught his best expression in a happy

moment ; and it was hard—oh, how hard ! for the lonely girl to believe that the loving and smiling face, with its tender dark eyes and crisp brown hair, was now too probably a lifeless piece of clay, mouldering under the waves of the tropical sea.

She had made up her mind to expect the worst, and that she could never see him more.

‘ It seems to me,’ she thought, ‘ as if I had ceased to be young, and had grown very old. God help me, now ! ’ she added, as she sank heavily into a chair, with a deathly pale face, and eyes that saw nothing, though staring into the dingy brick street without ; and though Dulcie’s tears came readily enough as a general rule, in the presence of this new and unexpected calamity, nature failed to grant her the boon—the relief of weeping freely. ‘ There is a period in all our lives,’ says a writer, ‘ when the heaviest grief will hardly keep us waking ; we may sink to slumber with undried tears upon our face ; we may sob and murmur through the long night ; but still we have the happy power of

losing consciousness and gaining strength to bear the next day's trial.'

So Dulcie, worn with heavy thought, could find oblivion for a time, and even slept with the roar of mighty London in her ears.

The vicar had not yet returned, so day followed day with her, aimlessly and hopelessly.

She thought the public prints could give her no further tidings now. She knew not where to seek for intelligence, and could but wait, dumbly, expectantly, and count the hours as they drifted wearily past, in the desperate longing that some tidings would reach her at some time of her dearest, it might be now her dead, one!

The Parks were completely empty then; the sunshine was pleasant and warm for the season; the grass was green and beautiful; and lured thereby one forenoon, the pale girl went forth for a little air, when there occurred an extraordinary catastrophe that, in her present weakened state of mind and body, was fully calculated to destroy her!

The afternoon passed—the evening and

the night too, yet she did not as usual return to her humble lodging. The morning dawned without a trace of her ; the landlady began to appraise her few effects ; the landlord shook his head, winked knowingly, and said, 'She was far too pretty to live alone,' and deemed it the old story over again—a waif *lost in London*.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE TERRIBLE MISTAKE.

DULCIE had thought that no possible harm could accrue to her from rambling or sitting in that beautiful Park alone, and watching the children playing with their hoops along the gravelled walk. With whom could she go? She had no one to escort her. She knew not that it was not quite etiquette for a young lady to be there alone and unattended; but the event that occurred to her was one which she could never have anticipated.

She had sat for some time, absorbed in her own thoughts, on one of the rustic sofas not far from Stanhope Gate, all unaware that an odd-looking and mean-looking, but carefully dressed little man had been hovering near her, and observing her closely with his

keen small ferret-like eyes, and with an expression of deep interest, destitute, however, of the slightest admiration, and with a kind of sardonic and stereotyped smile in which mirth bore no part.

He scanned her features from time to time, grinned to himself, and ever and anon consulted something concealed in his hand.

‘Golden hair—sealskin jacket—sable muff—hat and feather—a silver necklet—all right,’ he muttered, and then he advanced close towards her.

Dulcie looked up at him with surprise, and then with an emotion of alarm, mingled with confusion, which he was neither slow to see nor misinterpret—

‘May I ask your name?’ said he in a mild tone.

‘Miss Carlyon—Dulcie Carlyon.’

‘Ah! you speak good English.’

‘I am English.’

‘And not a furriner?’

‘No,’ replied Dulcie in growing alarm.

But you reside in London, just now?’

‘Just now—yes,’ said Dulcie, seeing that

he was comparing her face with that of a photo in his hand.

‘With your family—friends?’

‘I have no family—no friends,’ said Dulcie, with a sob in her throat, and starting up to withdraw in great alarm.

‘Just so—not here, but at Ostend, perhaps.’

Thinking her questioner was mad or intoxicated, Dulcie, in growing terror, was about to move away when he laid a hand very decidedly on her left arm.

‘Leave me,’ she exclaimed, and on looking around her terror increased on seeing that no male aid was near her; ‘who are you that ask these questions—that dare to molest me?’

‘My name is Grabbly — Mr. Gilpin Grabbly, of Scotland Yard—oh, you’ll know enough o’ me, my dear, before I’m done with you. Come along: you’re wanted partiklar—you are. Will you walk with me quietly?’

Perceiving that she was about to utter a shriek, he grasped her arm more tightly, even to the bruising of her soft tender skin, and said in a sharp hissing tone:

‘Don’t—don’t make a row: ’taint no use, my beauty—you must come along with me.’

‘Oh, what do you mean?’ moaned Dulcie, almost incapable of standing now.

‘Mean—why, that you are my prisoner, that is all.’

‘Am I mad or dreaming? Oh, sir, this is some dreadful mistake.’

‘No mistake at all,’ said Mr. Grabbly tauntingly.

They were out in Park Lane now, and Dulcie cast a despairing glance at the many closed and shuttered windows of the mansions there, as if she would summon aid.

‘Look here, gal,’ said the detective, for such Mr. Grabbly was, ‘I have orders to arrest the original of this fotygraf—you are that original—look! don’t you see yourself, as if in a looking-glass?’

Dulcie did look, with a kind of horrible fascination, and recognised in it a very striking resemblance to her face and dress—even to the luckless silver locket and chain.

Mr. Grabbly utilised the moments of her

bewilderment. He stopped a passing cab—half lifted, half thrust her in.

‘Marlborough Street,’ said he to the driver, and they were driven off.

‘Of what am I accused?’ said Dulcie, driven desperate now.

‘Robbery on a railway—that’s all; and you knows all about it—the when and the where.’

If not the victim of some deliberate outrage, she was certainly the victim of some inexplicable mistake which might yet be explained; anyway in her ignorance and in her wild fear she strove to elicit succour from passers-by, till Mr. Grabbly closed the rattling glasses of the cab and held her firmly, while, like one in a dreadful dream, she was rapidly driven through Berkley Square, across Bond Street and Regent Street, to their destination, where, when the cab stopped, she was quickly taken indoors, through a passage, in which several police officers and odd, repulsive-looking people of both sexes were loitering about, and whence she was conveyed by the inexorable Grab-

bley, to whom all appeals were vain, and left in a state of semi-stupefaction—after being led down a long corridor, having many doors opening on each side thereof—in a small bare room—a den it seemed, and if not quite a prison cell, yet dreary, cold, and comfortless enough to suggest the idea of being one.

She heard a key turned upon her, and felt that now—more than ever—she was a prisoner!

She had no sense of indignation as yet—only a wild and clamorous one of fear, or dread, she knew not of what—of being disgraced, and, it might be, the victim of a madman's freak. She was in utter solitude, and no sound seemed to be there but the loud beating of her heart.

Past grief and anxiety had rendered her very weak and unable to withstand the tension on her nerves caused by this astounding accusation and catastrophe, of which she could neither calculate nor see the end. Then an exhaustion that was utter and complete followed, and for a time she was physi-

cally and mentally prostrate—in that awful sense of desolation and heart-broken grief that God in His mercy permits few to suffer. . . . So passed the night.

‘A person—a gentleman,’ said a commissioner at the Rag doubtfully to Villiers as he entered the vestibule, ‘has been waiting here for nearly an hour for you, sir.’

‘Oh—it is you, Mr.—Mr.——’

‘Grabbey, sir,’ said the little man affably, his ferret eyes twinkling, and his vulgar face rippling over with a smile.

‘You have some news, I suppose?’

‘Yes, sir, I’ve nabbed her.’

‘When?’

‘Yesterday morning.’

‘Where?’

‘In Hyde Park—nigh Stanhope Gate. She speaks English uncommonly well to be a furriner.’

‘That’s sharp work! You are a clever fellow, Grabbey. Was my pocket-book found upon her?’

‘We did not search her, but she is locked up at Marlborough Street, where I would like you

to see and identify her before making out the matter in the charge sheet.'

'All right—get a cab. Come with me, Hammersley, and I'll show you my little Belgienne.'

Hammersley went unwillingly, as it was pretty close on the time he had now begun to visit Finella at her grandmother's residence, and he cast longing eyes at the windows of the latter as he and his two companions were driven out of the square.

'A horrid atmosphere, and a horrid place in all its details,' he muttered, when the scene of Dulcie's detention was reached, and throwing away the fag end of a cheap cigar Mr. Grabbly, with an expression of no small satisfaction, puckering his visage, unlocked and threw open the door—a sound which roused Dulcie from her stupefied state—and starting up she stood before them, trembling in every fibre, with a hunted expression in her dark blue eyes and a gathering hope in her breast, to find herself confronted by two such men of unexceptionable appearance and bearing as Hammersley

and Villiers, who raised his hat, and turning with astonishment and some dismay to the police official said sharply :

‘ This is some great—some truly infernal mistake!’

‘ A mistake—how, sir ?’ asked Grabbley.

‘ This young lady is *not* the person whose photo I gave you.’

‘ They seems as like as two peas.’

‘ The likeness, I admit, is great, but the Belgian girl, I told you, could not speak a word of English, or scarcely so. I have to offer you a thousand apologies, though the mistake is not mine, but that of this man,’ said Villiers, bowing low to Dulcie, greatly impressed by the sweetness of her beauty and terror of the predicament in which she had been placed.

‘ So it’s a mistake after all, young gal,’ growled Mr. Grabbley, with intense disappointment and reluctance to relinquish his prey.

‘ And may I go, sir ?’ said Dulcie piteously to Villiers.

‘ Most certainly—you are free,’ replied

Villiers, who was again about to apologize and explain, but the girl, like a hunted creature, drew her veil tightly across her tear-blotched face, rushed along the dingy corridor, and gained the street in an instant.

That she was a lady in every sense of tone and bearing was evident, and Villiers felt overcome with shame and contrition, and swore in pretty round terms at the crest-fallen Grabbly.

‘This is a devil of a mistake!’ said the latter as he scratched his head in dire perplexity.

‘A mistake we have not, perhaps, heard the end of. Who is she?’ asked Villiers.

‘I don’t know.’

‘Did she give you no name?’

‘Yes—here it is,’ said Grabbly, producing a dirty note-book; ‘Dulcie Carlyon.’

‘A curious and uncommon name.’

‘Who do you say—Dulcie Carlyon?’ exclaimed Hammersley, who had hitherto been silent, starting forward; and on the name being repeated to him once or twice,

‘Great Heaven!’ he exclaimed, ‘if it should be the same!’

‘Same what—or who?’

‘The girl to whom Florian is engaged: you remember Florian of ours.’

‘Of course I do.’

‘Golden hair, blue eyes, under middle height (how often he has described her to me), and then the name—Dulcie Carlyon; it must be she—let us overtake her! What an astounding introduction!’

But that was easier proposed than accomplished. On gaining the street the two officers saw not a trace of Dulcie Carlyon, so all hope of discovering her address was gone.

How Dulcie made her way back to her obscure lodgings she scarcely knew; but she was long and seriously ill after this startling event.

There she felt as much at home as a creature so poor and friendless could feel. Often she lay abed and seemed unconscious, but she was not so. Her eyes were wide open, and their gaze wandered about; her

lips were generally dry and quivering. She was in the state which generally comes after a severe mental shock ; her mind refused to grasp the situation.

Until a drink was given her by Ellen, the kind little maid of all work, she sometimes knew not how parched her throat was—how sorely athirst she had been.

She was afraid to be left alone after that horrible accusation. In her nervousness she feared that she might see her double—feel a touch, and on turning find herself face to face with her own likeness, as that evil Lord of Fettercairn did who sold his country.

Finella's astonishment to hear from Hammersley the story of where and under what circumstances he had met Dulcie Carlyon was only equalled by his own on learning that Florian, his comrade and brother-officer in the Zulu war, and whilom private soldier in his company of the 24th, was heir to a peerage, and the cousin of his affianced wife, Finella Melfort.

For so it was. Lord and Lady Fettercairn had undergone so much in the mis-

management of family matters latterly, and in years long past, that they were now well disposed to let Finella alone, and in all conscience they could not expect her to give to Florian (if he ever returned) the love she had never given to the now vanished Shafto.

‘Vivian, you must find out the address of dear Dulcie,’ said she.

‘If I can.’

‘You must. I shall want her as one of my bridesmaids.’

From this we may presume that matters between these two were all in fair training now.

‘Your wish would delight Villiers, my groomsman, who has been sorrowing about her ever since the time of that terrible mistake.’

CHAPTER XIX.

DULCIE'S VISITOR.

ON an afternoon subsequent to this episode Dulcie was lost in a day-dream, born of her own sad thoughts, her soft blue eyes fixed vacantly on the hideous and dingy brick edifices of the thoroughfare in which she dwelt; and when roused therefrom by the little maid of all work, she gazed at her with a somewhat dazed expression.

‘What is it, Ellen?’ she asked.

‘A gentleman, miss, wishes to see you.’

Alarm—dread, she knew not of what, was her first idea now.

‘Who is he?’ she asked.

‘I don’t know, miss.’

‘Is he old or young?’

‘Young.’

‘Then he can’t be the vicar?’

‘Oh, lawk, no, miss, he ain’t a bit like a clergyman,’ replied the housemaid, laughing.

‘Ask his business, Ellen.’

She was almost relapsing into her dream again, when she was startled by seeing a man appear beside her.

‘Dulcie?’ said a voice, that made her heart thrill.

She sprang up to find herself confronted by a gentleman, whose face, though thin and worn, seemed deeply tanned by the sun, so that his scorched neck was absolutely red; his dark moustache was thick and heavy, his shoulders broad and square.

‘Dearest Dulcie, don’t you know me?’ said he, holding out his hands and arms.

‘Florian—is this you—really you?’

‘I thought you would not quite forget me.’

‘Forget you!’ said Dulcie, in a low and piercing voice, as she fell upon his breast, and his loving arms went closely round her.

‘Oh, Florian, I did not know you were in England!’

‘We were landed at Plymouth three days ago. I got your address from good old Paul Pentreath, procured leave of absence, and came on here without a moment’s delay, my own darling.’

For some minutes neither could find words to speak, so supreme was the mutual happiness of the sudden reunion.

‘How brown you are! but how thin, and how much older you look!’ said Dulcie, surveying him with bright but tearful eyes. ‘I can scarcely believe you to be the same Florian that left me only a year ago or so.’

‘Ay, Dulcie, pet; but soldiering, especially soldiering in the ranks, takes a lot out of a fellow. But I am the same Florian that left you then, with a heavy and hopeless heart indeed.’

‘And now——’

‘Now I shall leave you no more.’

‘What dreadful places you must have been in, Florian; what dangers you have faced; what sufferings undergone, my love!’

‘The thought of you lightened and brightened them all to me, Dulcie,’ said he, while into her bright little English face came that wonderful and adoring smile only possible on the lips and in the eyes of a woman who is in love, and for the object of her love.

She told him of her simple plans and humble prospects, of her hope in the vicar, why she had left Craigengowan, and how she came to be in that poor and cheap lodging-room near Oxford Street.

‘We must not lose sight of each other now, my darling,’ said he, as she nestled her face on his breast. ‘Let us get married at once, love, and then it must be service in India for me. Are you ready to face heat, it may be fever, and Heaven knows what more, Dulcie?’

‘Every peril, if with you!’

‘My brave little soldier’s wife! But suppose we grow tired of each other?’

‘You wicked wag!—why think of such a thing?’

‘Married folks do sometimes,’ said he, laughing.

‘Then we should part — I would run away.’

‘As a preliminary to that we must be united, Dulcie ; so when will you be ready to marry me ?’

‘Oh, Florian !’

‘You must say—we have little time to lose.’

‘I have no trousseau to get—and no money for it—we are so poor, Florian.’

‘But rich in love—well then—when ?’

‘I don’t know,’ was the shy, coy answer.

‘This day three weeks—I can afford even a special license, Dulcie.’

‘So be it, dear Florian.’

‘Then I shall write to good old Paul Pentreath about it, and then we must resolutely think of turning our steps to India. We could not afford to live at home.’

Their little plans—little, though of vast importance to them—were all arranged, and discussed so sweetly, so lovingly, again and again, and at last he left her for his hotel, which was not far off, in Oxford Street, with a promise to call for her again betimes on

the morrow; and to Dulcie it seemed as if the sun had come with a glorious burst of radiance at last into the cloudy atmosphere of her life; that joy had come with it; and that sorrow and tears—save those of happiness—had gone for ever.

So, in three weeks the life of Dulcie Carlyon would be over; and the life of Dulcie MacIan would begin.

Dulcie MacIan—how odd it seemed to sound!

And so, at the appointed time, Mr. Paul Pentreath, summoned to London for the special occasion, tied the 'fatal knot' of the matrimonial noose for these two young people; and Dulcie, as in a dream, heard him ask:

'Wilt thou have this man to be thy wedded husband, to live together after God's ordinance, in the holy estate of matrimony?'

And in a clear and confident tone little Dulcie said, 'I will,' as she loved, frankly—loved 'as a fair honest English maiden may with her heart on her lips, and all her soul shining out of her truthful eyes.'

So the marriage passed quietly ; there were no lawyers, dressmakers, outfitters, and all those other folks who never keep time ; no attendants, save Dulcie's landlady, the clerk, and honest Tom Tyrrell, whose 'time being out,' contrived to turn up about this crisis to wish, with all the ardour of his gallant heart, his whilom comrade and officer, with his fair young bride, 'God speed ;' and after a quiet little honeymoon at Richmond—no further off—Florian set forth to the Horse Guards for the purpose of effecting an exchange to a regiment in India ; but a letter that came to him altered all his views and plans.

It was from Mr. Kenneth Kippilaw, W.S., who had seen the marriage announced in a public print, and had written at once to Florian and to Lord Fettercairn.

When Abou Hassan, the merchant of Bagdad, woke up on that remarkable morning, and he found himself in the palace of Haroun al Raschid, and treated as the latter by all the beautiful ladies of the Court, and the black slaves around his couch, he was

scarcely more astonished than our poor Lieutenant of Infantry, when he found himself to be the heir of Craigengowan and Fettercairn !

He then knew all about Shafto's villainy, yet in the gentleness of his spirit he joined with Dulcie in saying :

‘ Poor creature ! God help and forgive him, as freely as I do.’

Sooth to say, Dulcie was perhaps less astonished on finding Florian was the true heir ; she had ever thought there was some mystery in the new position and new relationship, so suddenly assumed by the wily Shafto, whose tissue of falsehoods had, as usual in such cases, broken down by an unthought-of point.

Amid the sudden splendour of his prospects, such was his simplicity of character, that one of Florian's first thoughts was of a cosy cottage at Craigengowan for his comrade Tom Tyrrell !

The news spread like wildfire through all the Mearns, Angus, and everywhere else. It proved a great godsend, and the vicinity of

Inverbervie was besieged by folks connected with the press, all eager to glean the last authentic information from Craigengowan, and even Grapeston, the butler, and MacCrupper, the head groom, were interviewed and treated—the former with wine, and the latter copiously with whisky and water—on the subject.

To Lady Fettercairn the marriage of Florian proved, of course, a cause of bitter mortification.

‘Another mesalliance—like father, like son!’ she exclaimed; ‘now indeed we shall be associated with Freethinkers, franchise folks, dynamiters, and all kinds of dreadful people!’ she wailed out.

The first alleged and hurriedly accepted heir had proved a ruinous blackleg; the second and true one was Flora MacIan’s son beyond all doubt—a gallant young fellow, who had ‘gone through the ranks to a commission!’ but, alas! he had married Dulcie Carlyon—the Devonshire lawyer’s daughter—her ‘companion,’ whom she had treated with no small contumely at Craigengowan,

where she was now to be welcomed as a bride and the future Lady Fettercairn!

It was all too much for the aristocratic brain of the present holder of that rank.

She sat in her boudoir at Craigengowan; it was small, but wonderfully pretty; the chairs were all of ivory and gilt; the walls hung with pale blue silk, embroidered with flowers; and she thought ruefully of the time when—if her Lord predeceased her—she would have to quit all that, and take up her abode at Finella Lodge, the humble dower-house—giving place to Dulcie Carlyon. It was all too horrible to think of!

But the couple were coming, and already she could hear the distant cheers of the tenantry.

Several young ladies—among them the daughters of Mr. Kippilaw—were seated about the room in expectation and in lounging attitudes, their garden bonnets or riding habits showing how they had been recently occupied.

A distant sound—was it of carriage-wheels—made her lapdog bark.

‘Down, Snap—be quiet,’ said Lady Fettercairn with more asperity than was her wont to that plethoric and pampered cur.

The volunteers were under arms on the lawn to salute Florian Melfort as a hero from Zululand; and a salute to his bride was boomed forth from an old battery of 6-pounders on the terrace; a banner was flaunting on the old tower, above all the vanes and turrets; bells were clashing in the distant kirk spire, and the cheers of the Craigen-gowan tenantry rang up amid the ancient trees in welcome to the heir of Fettercairn and his winsome young wife.

Lord Fettercairn received them at the door with what grace he might; but the hands of many others were held forth to him, among others those of old Kenneth Kippilaw, Madelon Galbraith, the aged butler, and Sandy MacCrupper.

All shadows had fled away, and the bright sunshine of heaven was over Craigengowan and in the hearts of all there.

Even Lady Fettercairn, when she met Florian and saw how like her youngest son

and his portrait he looked, felt all that she had of a mother's heart go forth to him as it had never done to the vanished Shafto ; while Florian, modest and gentle Florian, whose heart had never quailed before the enemy, now felt, as he said to Dulcie, somewhat 'dashed' on being confronted by this tall and aristocratic grandmother amid such splendid surroundings.

Dulcie recalled with wonder the humble position she had held at Craigengowan, and the many fears and mortifications to which she had been subjected by Lady Fettercairn and Shafto till the eventful morning of her flight, and how strange it seemed to her to be able to act as guide and cicerone over his own patrimony to Florian, and to show him that she was quite at home in that hitherto unknown land to him—the Howe of the Mearns !

And in a week or two more Finella and Hammersley were coming thither on their honeymoon trip.

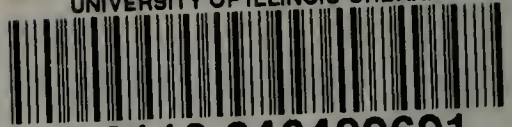
THE END.







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